The Reception of Dutch Genre Painting in England, 1695-1829

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Summary

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This thesis examines the place of Dutch genre painting in the English theory of art between 1695, when Dryden's translation of Du Fresnoy's De Arte Graphica established it as the quintessential example of bad artistic practice, and 1829, when the obsolescence of this way of thinking was signalled by the publication of volume one of John Smith's monumental Catalogue Raisonné of Netherlandish art. The sources consulted are primarily the published art theoretical and critical works of the period, but attention is also paid to collecting and to artistic practice where these had relevance for theoretical issues.

Part One addresses the negative understanding of Dutch genre in English theory before the late eighteenth century, taking into account the influence of other discourses such as literary theory and the debates of the Ancients and Moderns over scholarly and scientific method upon which English art theory drew. Particular attention is given to the criticisms of Dutch low genre for its vulgar humour and Dutch high genre for its literal imitation and minute finish, but the limited praise given to Dutch colour and chiaroscuro is also considered. A chapter is devoted to Reynolds, who changed the debate by conflating low and high genre and attacking both for literal copying rather than for humorous vulgarity.

Part Two examines the erosion of the belief that Dutch art was inferior, discussing changes in the art world which influenced art theory and the revaluation of the colour, detail and subject matter of Dutch art which ensued. The influence of external discourses, such as the rise of colour theory, is again considered. Reactions to the attempts of British genre painters to avoid the perceived faults of Dutch genre are analysed. The conclusion argues that in the early nineteenth century the opposition between Dutch and Italian art came to seem less important than that between modern English art and the Old Masters, whether Dutch or Italian. Appendices offer a statistical break-down of the Dutch genre paintings listed in the little-studied sales catalogues dating from 1689 to 1692 which survive in the British Library.

VOLUME ONE

Preface

This thesis examines the place of Dutch genre painting in the English theory of art between 1695, when Dryden's translation of Du Fresnoy's De Arte Graphica established it as the quintessential example of bad artistic practice, and 1829, when the obsolescence of this way of thinking was signalled by the publication of volume one of John Smith's monumental Catalogue Raisonné of Netherlandish art. My sources, which lie primarily in the art theory and art criticism published in England between 1600 and 1845, are discussed in more detail in the Introduction. There are two volumes: Volume I contains the text, Volume II the list of illustrations and the plates.

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This thesis is entirely my own work and contains nothing which is the outcome of collaboration. It is not substantially the same as any thesis that I have submitted or will submit for a qualification at any other institution. It does not exceed the 80 000 word limit, with the exception of eight pages of Appendices for which I have dispensation from the Board of Graduate Studies.

H.T. Mount.

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Above all I would like to thank my supervisor, John Gage, for his advice, support and example.

Abbreviations

B.L.	British Library
B.M.	British Museum
B.M. Satires	Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum (ed. F. G. Stephens & M. D. George), London, 1870-1947.
Burl.	Burlington Magazine
Discourses	Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art (ed. Robert R. Wark), New Haven & London, 1975.
H.MSS.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission
J W.C.I.	Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes
P.M.L.A.	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
Walp.	The Walpole Society
V.& A. Sales	Victoria and Albert Museum MS 86 00 18-19, transcripts of auction sales 1711-59, by Richard Houlditch.
Y.C.B.A.	Yale Center for British Art

Note on Presentation

Sources cited for the first time in the footnotes are given in full. Thereafter they are abbreviated, but all sources cited more than once are given in full in the Bibliography. Wherever possible I have retained the original typography and spelling in the quotations. All dates have been adapted to the New Style. All references to 'Ostade' refer to Adriaen van Ostade, not his brother, Isaack, unless otherwise stated.

'Fashion is gentility running away from vulgarity'.

-- William Hazlitt,
Conversations of James Northcote (1830)

Introduction

The Role of Exemplars in the Early Modern Theory of Art

> In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness such things as may cheer you...They paint stuffs and masonry, the green grass of the fields, the shadow of trees, and rivers and bridges, which they call landscapes, with many figures on this side and many figures on that. And all this, although it pleases some persons, is done without reason or art, without symmetry or proportion, without skilful choice or boldness and, finally, without substance or vigour.[1]

Art historians have recently found this passage, attributed in 1548 to Michelangelo, useful as a succinct summary of the criticisms directed at Netherlandish art during the three centuries after it was written.[2] As an example of bad practice Netherlandish painting played an important role in the art theory of this period, usually as a negative contrast to Italian history painting. Netherlandish art may, indeed, be said to be one of the paradigms which were central to the early modern theory of art.

It is necessary to define what I mean by the word 'paradigm', which will be of some importance in what follows. I wish to define paradigms as privileged and generally accepted examples of good or bad practice which were more than mere illustrations, being accepted as embodying an essential truth about a problem and as a necessary component of any discussion of it. Agreement about their significance defined as a discursive community those

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[1] Francisco de Hollanda, Four Dialogues on Painting, London, 1928, p.16.

[2] See e.g. S. Alpers, The Art of Describing, Chicago, 1983, pp.19-20. Its popularity owes nothing to any historical importance, indeed, it remained almost unknown before the mid-nineteenth century (see D. Summers, Michelangelo and the Language of Art, Princeton, 1981, pp.25-7).

writing art theory and served to endorse any rules which they were held to embody.[3] In art theory examples first became paradigmatic when Alberti's successors began to repeat the anecdotes which he had culled from Pliny and to construct their theories around them. It was, for example, customary when discussing finish to follow Alberti in citing Apelles' belief that Protogenes did not know when to stop working on a picture.[4] While the popularity of the story owed much to the Renaissance concern with sprezzatura,[5] the story, as a memorable anecdote, itself encouraged criticism of excessive finishing, perpetuating it beyond the lifespan of the courtly ideal of negligence. It also served as a reference point for later adjustments to theoretical doctrine on the question of finish.

Alberti's use of classical stories for his exempla was crucial in the establishment of the paradigmatic way of thought in art theory, since the stories were widely familiar.[6] Anecdotes about lost works of ancient art were, however, of limited applicability. In the sixteenth century writers turned increasingly to modern painting for examples. One instance was Vasari's celebrated distinction between the disegno of the Tuscan and Roman schools and the colorito of the Venetian school.[7] The distinction did not

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[3] My definition of paradigms owes much to that proposed by T. S. Kuhn for the history of science (see The Structures of Scientific Revolutions (1962), Chicago, 1970, pp.10-23, 92-110), particularly in the sense that a paradigm is defined not as a concept, but as a concrete example which serves as a focus for the various rules drawn from it, and in the sense that belief in a paradigm defines scientists as a community. Important differences, however, should be noted: art theoretical paradigms were not usually prior to the theories they were held to embody, and no 'scientific revolution' was needed to overturn them.

[4] De Pictura (c.1435), London, 1972, s.61.

[5] See S. H. Monk, '"A Grace beyond the Reach of Art"', Journal of the History of Ideas V, 1944, pp.133-45.

[6] For similar conclusions about the importance of these anecdotes see M. Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, Oxford, 1971, pp.35-8.

[7] Le Vite de'Piu Eccellenti Pittori Scultori e Architettori (1568), Firenze, 1967, VII, pp.327-8.

merely imply the superiority of disegno but also, by association, that of a cluster of other qualities, including a deference to antiquity, already identified with Tuscan and Roman art. Venetian art, meanwhile, was identified not only with sensual colour but also with other qualities identified elsewhere as inferior, such as the literal and detailed imitation of unselected nature. Vasari's distinction became paradigmatic by virtue of its repeated use by later writers, and his arrangement of a positive and a negative example in a hierarchical dualism became the characteristic format for the deployment of paradigms in early modern art theory. These dualisms were incorporated within the larger hierarchies of schools and genres upon which the academic art theories developed largely in France in the seventeenth century were built. At the same time, as I will show, the cluster of faults which Vasari had attributed to the Venetians had begun to be discerned in Dutch art, which became in its turn a negative paradigm. At the end of the seventeenth century this paradigm was inherited from continental theory by the first systematic theorists of art in England, where, due to local circumstances, it was emphasised particularly strongly.

What is gained by describing the negative presentation of Dutch painting in English art theory as paradigmatic? In the first place, it acknowledges the importance of Dutch art, and of other oft-repeated exemplars, in early modern art theory, an importance which went beyond mere illustration. Second, it reflects the capacity of Dutch art to act not simply as the illustration of a single error, but as the focus for a cluster of errors, as a section of the art theoretical edifice held together by the belief that Dutch art was misguided. Third, it recognises that belief in the inferiority of Dutch art was among the shared tenets

which furnished the art theoretical community with grounds for a common discourse, at least prior to the transformation of that discourse in the early nineteenth century. Finally, it facilitates an understanding of the role played by changing ideas about Dutch art in that transformation. Given the fundamental importance of paradigms in early modern art theory, the shape of that theory became vulnerable once they were questioned. English theory was at first able to accomodate new ideas about Dutch art which emerged during the eighteenth century without abandoning its paradigmatic belief in its inferiority, but by the early nineteenth century the discrepancies between the paradigm and the revaluation of Dutch art became too great to be contained. At this moment the paradigm was shattered into several competing points of view.

At the same time other art theoretical paradigms also came under fire. The old paradigms were not, however, abandoned or supplanted but merely took their place alongside many different shades of opinion. The process may be characterised as the decline of the paradigmatic way of thought and its replacement by a mentality in which the dominant framework for the arrangement of art historical knowledge was no longer the hierarchy of genres or schools but the dictionary of artists, with its egalitarian principle of alphabetical arrangement. Once-privileged exempla lost the power they had held as paradigms. This is not to say that they disappeared: criticism of Dutch art on traditional grounds is still heard today. What did disappear was the consensual nature of that criticism and its integral place in any work claiming to be serious art theory. The paradigmatic way of thought in art theory was, in other words, a historically discrete phenomenon, holding sway only between Alberti and the early nineteenth century.

The paradigmatic understanding of Dutch art as inferior was, I will argue, one of the fundamental building blocks from which the English theory of art was built. While the place of Dutch art in English theory has long been recognised it has hitherto received only incidental attention, and its exemplary use has usually been presented as no more than illustration, rather than as an essential component of the theoretical fabric.[8] In this study I hope to offer a more considered view of the role of Dutch painting in the English theory of art.

The shape of my thesis is determined by two beliefs. The first is that the period from the Restoration to the accession of Victoria constitutes a natural unit for thinking about the development of English theory. During this period contintental art theory with its paradigmatic structures was introduced to England, adapted to local circumstances and then gradually diluted until it was no longer dominant. A change in attitudes to Dutch art, from denigration to qualified praise, occurred during the same period and was an integral part of this wider process.

The second belief is that ideas about Dutch genre in English theory cannot be understood without reference to the discourses upon which that theory drew. Prior to the later eighteenth century English art theoretical works, for example those by Dryden, Shaftesbury, Hogarth and Webb, are more striking for their divergences from one another than for what they hold in common, which is often reducible to agreement about such paradigms as the

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[8] Two exceptions, both of which focus on the early nineteenth-century, are J. Gage, 'Turner and the Picturesque - I', Burl. CVII, 1965, pp.16-25; and A. Hemingway, 'The Progress of Taste and the Example of Dutch Art in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain', unpub. paper given at University College London Conference, 'The Low Countries and the World', 12-15 April 1989. I am grateful to Andrew Hemingway for letting me read his paper.

inferiority of Dutch art. This disparity was caused in part by the dependence of the immature English theory of art on an agglomeration of discourses drawn from diverse sources. The most important parent discourse for English theory, and the one which furnished English theorists with most of their common ground, was the more mature theory of art that had been developed on the continent. The hegemony of this discourse over the nascent English theory of art was, however, challenged by native discourses, one of which, as John Barrell has shown, was that which we now call 'civic humanism'.[9] Barrell shows the influence of this discourse on English theory, but, I believe, exaggerates its importance by paying less attention to the other discourses upon which, as he admits, that theory also drew.[10] These included literary theory and the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. I have concentrated on some of these neglected discourses, partly because Barrell has dealt so magisterially with the political dimension, partly because they were, in general, more important than civic humanism for attitudes to Dutch art.

The first part of the thesis addresses the negative understanding of Dutch genre in English theory prior to the late eighteenth century. Chapter One looks at the close artistic links between England and the Low Countries in the seventeenth century, ending with the first attempts by English writers to distance English art from that of the Netherlands. The other chapters reflect the aggregate nature of early English theory, considering the extent to which vocabularies drawn from various discourses entered art theory contaminated with connotations acquired in their original fields. Chapters Two and Three discuss the criticisms of Dutch

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[9] The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt, New Haven & London, 1986.

[10] Ibid., p.9.

low genre for its vulgar humour and Dutch high genre for its literal imitation and minute finish. While both complaints originated in continental art theory, the language with which they were expressed in England was largely drawn from other fields, that of literary theory for low genre, that of the debates between the Ancients and Moderns for high genre. Both chapters focus on 'terms of exclusion'[11] used to designate Dutch genre as inferior to Italian history painting: 'droll' for low genre, 'minute' for high. Chapter Four considers the praise given to the colour and chiaroscuro of Dutch art. This praise was, paradoxically, also exclusionary, since colour and chiaroscuro were agreed to be inferior qualities. The fifth chapter discusses Reynolds, who shifted the terms of the discussion by conflating low and high genre and attacking both for literal copying rather than for humorous vulgarity. Reynolds also transformed English art theory into a single discourse; his achievement in producing a synthesis of its various strands and his prestige compelling future writers, even those who disagreed with him, to take up their positions in relation to his ideas. If English theory now gained greater autonomy from other discourses it also acquired a more immediate relationship to collecting and artistic practice, and thus became vulnerable to developments such as the growing interest in Dutch art among collectors and painters.

The second part of the thesis examines the consequent erosion of the paradigmatic belief in the inferiority of Dutch art. Chapter Six outlines the changes in the art world which exerted new forces on the theory of painting. Chapter Seven considers the growing appreciation of the

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[11] The phrase is taken from E. H. Gombrich, Norm and Form, Oxford, 1966, p.88.

chiaroscuro and colour of Dutch genre, relating it to the rise of colour theory. The eighth chapter examines new ideas about minuteness and the effect upon them of developments in aesthetics and changing attitudes to natural philosophy. The ninth discusses increasingly sympathetic readings of the subjects of Dutch genre, hitherto seen as vulgar, in the light of changing attitudes to the representation of the poor. Chapter Ten analyses responses to the attempts of British genre painters to avoid the errors of their Dutch predecessors. The conclusion argues that in the early nineteenth century the paradigmatic opposition between Dutch and Italian art came to seem less important than that between modern English art and the Old Masters, whether Dutch or Italian.

I have concentrated on published theory, especially that which was well-known or influential, since it was of the greatest importance in determining the theoretical climate. I have also consulted a representative sample of the vast quantity of journal criticism which survives from the early nineteenth century, including all the periodicals which were devoted to the fine arts. More obscure written sources have been cited where they illuminate a particular problem or the ideas of an important thinker. Contintental sources have also been used where they were influential. I have, for reasons of space, restricted evidence concerning collecting and artistic response to that with specific relevance for theoretical issues,[12] although I do discuss some hitherto little studied sale catalogues.

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[12] For fuller discussions see H. Gerson, Ausbreitung und Nachwirkung der Holländischen Malerei des 17.Jahrhunderts, Haarlem, 1942; F. Haskell, Rediscoveries in Art, Oxford, 1976; A. Meadows, 'Collecting Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting in England 1689-1760', unpub. University College London Ph.D. thesis, 1988; A. W. Moore, Dutch and Flemish Painting in Norfolk, London, 1988; F. Simpson, 'Dutch Paintings in England before 1760', Burl. XCV, 1953, pp.39-42.

There are two main reasons for focussing on genre. In the first place, since it was figural, genre could be directly contrasted with history painting and was thus given an especially important theoretical role. In the second place, the response of English theorists to Dutch genre both affected and was affected by their attitude to native genre. An analysis of attitudes to Dutch genre may therefore contribute to the understanding of British genre painting.

The term 'Dutch genre' needs qualification. The word genre only acquired its modern sense of paintings of everyday life in late eighteenth-century France, and the term did not reach England until the 1820s.[13] Before this genre pictures were known by various names, including 'drolls', 'conversations' and 'pictures of familiar life'. If genre was not an eighteenth-century term, however, it was an eighteenth-century category, works of this sort being recognised as a distinct group. The term genre may thus be kept. Similarly, it is helpful to use the anachronistic terms low genre and high genre to label, respectively, paintings of low life and paintings of more elevated life emphasising the executive skill of the artist. During this period high and low genre at times evoked very different responses. It should, however, be remembered that some genre painters, like Steen, do not fit easily into either group.

By 'Dutch' genre I mean also Flemish genre painters. My aim here is to reflect contemporary categories and I have taken my lead from Reynolds,

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[13] W. Stechow and C. Comer state that the term reached England in the 1840s ('The History of the Term Genre', Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin XXXIII, 1975-6, p.94). It was in fact used as early as 1821 (London Magazine III, p.684), but it is rare before 1840, and its first use in a taxonomy of painting was probably that seen in Anna Jameson's Handbook to the Public Galleries of Art in and near London, London, 1842, I, p.xvi.

who included Teniers among the Dutch school on the following grounds:

> I consider those painters as belonging to this school, who painted only small conversations, landscapes, &c. Though some of those were born in Flanders, their works are principally found in Holland: and to separate them from the Flemish school, which generally painted figures large as life, it appears to me more reasonable to class them with the Dutch painters, and to distinguish those two schools rather by their style and manner, than by the place where the artist happened to be born.[14]

Throughout this period the words 'Dutch' and 'Flemish' were often used for the Netherlands as a whole,[15] and it should be remembered that the Low Countries were united between 1815 and 1830. Where a distinction between Flemish and Dutch genre is important I have made it clear. No study of responses to Dutch art would be complete without Rembrandt, but since his place in eighteenth-century theory has received much attention[16] he has only been considered where his works were thought to be genre paintings or where attitudes to him bear upon ideas about genre. I have specified England, not Britain, because the history of attitudes to Dutch art in Scotland is a different story.[17] The ideas of Scottish and Irish thinkers were important, as were Scottish paintings, but I will discuss these only in relation to the English situation.

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[14] 'A Journey to Flanders and Holland in the Year 1781', in The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, London, 1797, II, p.87. Cf. the Abbé Du Bos, Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting, London, 1748, II, p.51. Le Nain was also often called Dutch, on similar grounds (see William Hazlitt, Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries in England (1824), in The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, London, 1930-4, X, p.35; James Dallaway, An Account of All the Pictures Exhibited in...the British Institution, from 1813 to 1823, London, 1824, p.222).

[15] Roger de Piles and Carlo Gambarini both included Dutch painters within the Flemish school in their lists of schools (The Art of Painting, London, 1706 p.68; A Description of the Earl of Pembroke's Pictures, Westminster, 1731, p.60).

[16] See J. A. Emmens, Rembrandt en de Regels van de Kunst, Utrecht, 1968; S. Slive, Rembrandt and His Critics, 1630-1730, The Hague, 1953; C. White, D. Alexander & E. D'Oench, Rembrandt in Eighteenth-century England, Y.C.B.A. exhib. cat., 1983.

[17] The subject awaits a separate study. For observations on some of the differences see E. D. H. Johnson, Paintings of the British Social Scene, London, 1986, pp.140-2.

PART ONE

Chapter I

Dutch Genre Painting in England 1600-1700

There had been strong artistic links between England and the Low Countries since the Middle Ages.[1] These links facilitated the arrival of Netherlandish genre paintings in England almost as soon as genre emerged as a distinct type of painting in the Low Countries. In the 1560s the Fleming Joris Hoefnagel portrayed a feast at Bermondsey in a style reminiscent of Pieter Brueghel the Elder (pl.1).[2] Paintings with genre elements, either probably or certainly Netherlandish, are found in late Elizabethan and Jacobean inventories. In 1590 Lord Lumley owned pictures of a 'banquetting in Flaunders' and 'a Dutche woman selling of fruyte', as well as other genre paintings.[3] In 1599 a picture of a 'Dutch cook with fruit' was seen in Elizabeth I's collection,[4] and other kitchen scenes were owned by James I's son, Prince Henry, and his consort, Anne of Denmark. Anne also owned a picture of a 'Dutch Boare'.[5] The frequent mention of kitchen scenes, most of the surviving examples of which include genre as well as still-life elements, suggests that they served a specific decorative function, perhaps as hangings for halls. Examples include the pictures of servants and game

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[1] See e.g. J. A. Knowles, 'Disputes between English and Foreign Glass-Painters in the Sixteenth Century', Antiquaries Journal V, 1925, pp.148-57; Moore, Dutch and Flemish Painting, pp.1-3; D. Ormrod, The Dutch in London: the Influence of an Immigrant Community 1550-1800, London, 1973; E. Waterhouse, Painting in Britain 1530 to 1790, Harmondsworth, 1978, p.15.

[2] See R. Strong, The English Icon, London, 1969, p.148.

[3] L. Cust, 'The Lumley Inventories', Walp. VI, 1917-18, p.27.

[4] White, The Dutch Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen, Cambridge, 1982, p.xiii.

[5] For Henry see England as Seen by Foreigners, ed. W. B. Rye, London, 1865, p.163; for Anne's 'Dutch Kitchins' see O. Millar, Dutch Pictures from the Royal Collection, London, 1971, p.8.

painted by the amateur Sir Nathanial Bacon,[6] who may have received tuition in the Low Countries[7] and who was indebted in his subjects to such Netherlandish painters as Bueckelaer and Engelszen (pl.2).[8] Less specific references to interest in Netherlandish art include the commissions received by William Trumbull, English chargé d'affaires at Brussels, from English collectors for the purchase of pictures between 1608 and 1613.[9] By 1621 Robert Burton was praising the 'excellent landskips, and Dutch-works' to be seen in noble collections.[10] Links with the Low Countries may also have affected the nascent vocabulary being developed in England for the discussion of painting. That the word 'landscape' was taken from the Dutch is well-known, but there are also chimes between 'kitchen' and the Dutch keucken, and 'conversation' and 'drollery' (pictures of peasants) and the Dutch conversatie and droll.[11]

Despite these links a belief in the supremacy of Italian history painting is seen from the first in English post-Reformation writings on art. This belief, which was encouraged by the influence of Italian

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[6] Two are now in the collection of the Earl of Verulam at Gorhambury. See B. Denvir, 'Sir Nathanial Bacon, some Notes on a Significant Artist', Connoisseur CXXXVII, 1956, pp.116-9.

[7] Vertue states that he studied painting abroad ('The Vertue Note Books II', Walp. XX, p.15). From the late sixteenth century British artists had been trained in the Netherlands, see Waterhouse, 'British Collections and Dutch Art', The Museums Journal LVI, 1956-7, p.138.

[8] A kitchen by Engelszen (nominally a Supper at Emmaus) was probably owned by Nathanial's brother Sir Nicholas Bacon (see F. W. Hawcroft, '"The Supper at Emmaus" by Cornelis Engelszen', Burl. XCIX, 1957, pp.95-6).

[9] H.MSS.C.: Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Downshire, London, 1936-40, II, p.55; III, pp.238, 369; IV, pp.71, 256.

[10] The Anatomy of Melancholy, Oxford, 1621, p.351. By 'Dutch works' he may mean prints, various sorts of paintings or, perhaps, more landscapes.

[11] For 'keucken' and 'conversatie' see L. De Pauw-De Veen, De Begrippen 'Schilder', 'Schilderij' en 'Schilderen' in de Zeventiende Eeuw, Brussels, 1969, pp.143-6, 172-5; for 'droll' see e.g. Carel van Mander, Het Schilder-Boeck, Haarlem, 1604, III, fol.228r. The dates of first usage in each country would have to be known before the direction of influence could be determined. In England drollery was current by the late sixteenth century (O.E.D.), but I have not found conversation mentioned before 1660.

books,[12] underlay both Ben Jonson's inclusion of six Italians as the only moderns in his list of great painters[13] and, surely, Shakespeare's choice of Giulio Romano as the 'sculptor' in The Winter's Tale. Other schools, however, were also revered, and it was not usual to present them as inferior to that of Italy. Typical was Hilliard's claim that there have been 'excelent' painters of Germany 'and of Italy, france, and the lowe countries also'. If he regrets that Dürer did not visit Italy it is less because of the quality of Italian art than of that of Italian life models.[14] More unequivocal about the relative inferiority of Dutch art was Thomas Dekker, who apologised to his dedicatee for sending:

> no better fruit then [sic] the sins of a City...Yet now I remember my selfe, they are not the Sinnes of a Citie, but onely the picture of them. And a Drollerie (or Dutch peece of Lantskop) may sometimes breed in the beholder's eye, as much delectation, as the best and most curious master-peece excellent in that Art.[15]

Dekker's implication, that Dutch art was to be admired for the manner of painting and in spite of the subject matter, echoed Aristotle's belief that even ugly things may please when well-imitated,[16] a point often made in later discussions of Dutch art. Early seventeenth-century English commentators more usually gave unqualified praise for Dutch art, however, and no-one yet made the direct comparison between Italian and Dutch art which would later become paradigmatic.

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[12] In 1598 Richard Haydocke translated Lomazzo's Trattato as A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintinge...; Vasari influenced the works by Hilliard and Peacham discussed below. Cf. L. Salerno, 'Seventeenth-Century English Literature on Painting', J.W.C.I. XIV, 1951, pp.234-258.

[13] Timber, or Discoveries (written c.1620-35, 1st pub. 1640-41), in J. E. Spingarn (ed.) Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, Oxford, 1908, I, p.31.

[14] A Treatise Concerning the Arte of Limning, Manchester, 1981, pp.70-72. This work, written c.1598-1603, was not published during the seventeenth century but was widely circulated in manuscript form.

[15] The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London (1606), Cambridge, 1905, p.6. It is unclear whether Dekker uses 'Lantskop' and 'drollerie' synonymously or whether he intends two different sorts of painting.

[16] Poetics, ch.IV.

The consensual belief in the supremacy of Italian art was reflected in the great collections of the Caroline era formed by the Earl of Arundel, the Duke of Buckingham and Charles I himself. All three collectors, however, also bought Dutch art. Arundel purchased a picture by Brueghel and Mostaert of 'a squabbling of clownes fallen out at Cardes',[17] and by 1654 the Arundel collection included five genre paintings by Mostaert, two by Teniers, seven by the Brueghels and one by Van de Venne.[18] The 1635 Buckingham inventory lists genre pieces by Mostaert and Honthorst.[19] Charles bought genre pictures by Terbrugghen (pl.3) and Pot.[20] Such eclecticism suggests that these collectors felt no need to proclaim their taste by emphasising certain schools. At this time the collecting of foreign art of any sort was remarkable enough to identify them as an élite, as Franciscus Junius, writing under Arundel's aegis, implied when he argued that collecting is limited to the very rich, and that others may enjoy pictures only when the wealthy throw open their doors.[21]

Since Junius did not mention modern art he offered few clear rules for taste. While he argues that painters should follow an idea of beauty rather than particular nature, he does not, unlike de Hollanda, ascribe the latter error to Dutch art. At times he seems sympathetic to genre, repeating Aristotle's dictum that the accurate imitation of 'foule things' may please, but he also regrets the low subjects chosen by Pyreicus, the Greek painter of 'Barbers and Coblers shops' nicknamed 'Rhyparographus'.

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17 M. F. S. Hervey, The Life Correspondence and Collections of Thomas Howard Earl of Arundel, Cambridge, 1921, pp.301-2.

18 M. L. Cox, 'Inventory of the Arundel Collection', Burl. XIX, 1911, pp.282-6, 323-5.

19 R. Davis, 'An Inventory of the Duke of Buckingham's Pictures, Etc., at York House in 1635', Burl. X, 1907, pp.379-81.

20 Millar, 'The Inventories and Valuations of the King's Goods 1649-51', Walp. XLIII, 1970-2, pp.299, 277.

21 The Painting of the Ancients, London, 1638, pp.81-2.

He advises artists rather to 'entertaine great thoughts'.[22] His book is, ultimately, less a prescription for a certain way of painting than an apologia for the art as a whole, and for its collection by the Arundels, and he never defines rules stringent enough to clash with their eclectic taste. Other writers in the Arundel circle who did discuss living artists followed the eclecticism of their patron. Henry Peacham adapted the lives of several Italian painters from Vasari to aid the 'advancement' of the art, but also recommended Dutch art, especially Dutch prints.[23] He was followed in this by Edward Norgate. Norgate also thought Flemish landscape painting supreme, but in history subjects he recommends the 'Imitation of those excellent Italian Masters in this Art soe much admired and celebrated by the Virtuosi', such as Raphael.[24] Norgate's belief that the Italians were supreme in history and the Dutch in landscape had earlier been expressed by Van Mander,[25] who may have exerted a considerable influence on early English writers on painting.[26]

Another Arundel satellite, John Evelyn, was fascinated by the many pictures, 'especially Landscips and Drolleries', he saw at a fair in Rotterdam in 1641. He bought some of them, later adding 'an excellent

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[22] Ibid., pp.5-9, 20-22; 79; 247, 52. For Pyreicus see Pliny, Natural History, 35, xxxvii.

[23] The Compleat Gentleman, London, 1622, pp.117-37, 108-9. On Dutch engravers cf. Hilliard (Treatise, p.70) and William Sanderson (Graphice, London, 1658, p.31).

[24] Miniatura, Oxford, 1919, pp.82, 42, 55. Written in 1649, it was not published in the seventeenth century but circulated in manuscript form.

[25] Het Schilder-Boeck, I, fols.7r, 16r. Van Mander (III, fol. 281v.), Peacham and Norgate all extolled the Dutch engraver Goltzius. For another instance in which Norgate echoes Van Mander see below, p.74.

[26] His book was certainly accessible. Peacham thought his lives of Italian painters easier to come by than those of Vasari (Compleat Gentleman, p.137). Van Mander continued to be read, see e.g. Sanderson, Graphice (1658) p.73. For Alexander Browne's translation of Het Schilder-Boeck see below p.22. He was still read as late as 1730, at least according to Henry Bell (The Perfect Painter, London, 1730, p.47).

drollery' by Cowenburgh.[27] In later life Evelyn maintained an eclectic approach to art. If he translated a doctrinaire statement of French academicism by Fréart de Chambray,[28] his own Sculptura was even-handed in its treatment of schools and genres even by the standards of an age when encyclopaedic comprehensiveness was the goal of the print collector. For example, he states that the masterpiece of the Dutch engraver Cornelis Visscher is a Deposition after Tintoretto, but devotes more attention to two of his genre prints, including a 'most rarely etched' depiction of an old man smoking and his wife frying pancakes.[29]

In short, English art theory prior to the Restoration was shapeless, at least inasmuch as it failed to express any firm preference for schools or genres. This amorphous quality was, to a great extent, a function of the scarcity of foreign art in England and the consequent meaninglessness of any differentiation between schools and artists. After the Restoration these circumstances began to change as paintings from the continent, including the Netherlands, started to enter England in larger numbers.

While some Royalists may have acquired a taste for Dutch genre during their continental exiles after the Civil War the only firm evidence concerns Charles II. Charles admired the work of Gerrit Dou, and reputedly tried, without success, to lure him to England.[30] The States of West Friesland and Holland made a point of including a work by Dou (pl.4) in

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27 The Diary of John Evelyn, London, 1959, pp.23-4, 32.
28 An Idea of the Perfection of Painting, London, 1668.
29 Sculptura, London, 1662, p.80.
30 See Arnold Houbraken, De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstchilders en Schilderessen, Amsterdam, 1718-21, III, p.33.

their gift of pictures to Charles in 1660.[31] After the Restoration English interest in Dutch art was nurtured by the strengthened political, dynastic and mercantile links between the countries. The politician Thomas Blathwayt, for example, acquired Dutch art during diplomatic visits to the Low Countries.[32] If few enjoyed Blathwayt's chances for travel there were other ways to buy Dutch paintings. While the network of dealers and auction-houses was still in its infancy in the 1680s, and while it was technically illegal to import pictures for sale until 1695,[33] as early as 1669 the quantity of Dutch art entering England was sufficiently great for it to seem a threat to native painters.[34] The number of Dutch artists visiting England also increased, perhaps in part due to the reduced demand for paintings in the United Provinces after the mid-century.[35] The Dutch wars did not seem to hamper this migration, indeed, the problems of the United Provinces may have hastened it, especially after the French invaded in 1672 and Charles invited Dutch people to come to England.[36] The war also caused Englishmen to return from Holland with their pictures.[37]

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[31] D. Mahon, 'Notes on the Dutch Gift to Charles II', Burl. XCI, 1949, p.304). Another picture in the gift may have been thought to be a genre piece: in W. Chiffinch's A Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures ...Belonging to King James the Second, made for James II, Elsheimer's Mocking of Ceres is called 'An Olde woman holding a Candle & a woman drincking' (London, 1758, no.518).

[32] Millar, 'Painting', in The Orange and the Rose, Victoria and Albert Museum exhib. cat., p.24. I have been unable to consult the inventory of Blathwayt's paintings at Dyrham Park, which is under repair.

[33] See I. Pears, The Discovery of Painting, New Haven & London, 1988, pp.50-61; Meadows, 'Collecting', pp.34-45. Exceptions were made for the import of pictures for private pleasure, e.g. those brought from Antwerp by Sir Robert Southwell in 1672 (Calendar of Treasury Books III:1669-72, London, 1908, p.1302).

[34] In 1669 the Painter-Stainer's Company resolved to prosecute a dealer for selling 'Dutchy peeces' (cit. Millar, 'Charles II and the Arts', in The Age of Charles II, R.A. exhib. cat., 1960-1, p.ix).

[35] For the declining demand see J. M. Montias, 'Cost and Value in Seventeenth-century Dutch Art', Art History X, 1987, pp.462-66.

[36] His declaration is reprinted in Meadows, 'Collecting', pp.413-4.

[37] In 1673 Thomas Evans and William Cranmer returned with nine cases of pictures (Calendar of Treasury Books IV:1672-5, London, 1909, p.391).

According to the 129 sale catalogues dating from 1689 to 1692 in the British Library[38] the most prolific Netherlandish genre painters working in late seventeenth-century England were Egbert van Heemskerk (and perhaps his eponymous father), Daniel Boon, Laureys de Castro, Willem de Ryck, Marcellus Laroon and Pieter van Roestraten (Appendix I). While the accuracy of the attributions in these catalogues is unverifiable they do at least show which genre painters were thought important. Other Dutch and Flemish immigrants or visitors such as Adriaen van Diest, Abraham Hondius, Godfried Schalken, Hendrik Vergazoon and Thomas Wyck were more occasional painters of genre (Appendix II). Dutch engravers whose repertory included genre also came to England, including Abraham Blooteling, Gerard Valcke and Paul van Somer.[39] A wider range of Dutch genre was accessible through imported prints,[40] some of which survive with both Dutch and English lettering.[41] English engravers also reproduced Dutch genre paintings, both those painted in the Netherlands and those painted in England.[42]

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[38] 128 of the catalogues are bound in B.L.1402.g.1 (nos.2-52, 44a, 54-69, 71, 73-109, 111-32), the other in B.L.Cup.645.e.5 (no.16). Only a few of these catalogues, a vital resource for assessing the paintings in circulation in late seventeenth-century England, have so far been analysed (see H. V. S. & M. S. Ogden, English Taste in Landscape in the Seventeenth Century, Ann Arbor, 1955, pp.89-92; Meadows, 'Collecting', pp.107-202).

[39] D. Alexander, 'Dutch Mezzotint Engraving in Holland and England in the Seventeenth Century', Connoisseur CXCIII, 1976, pp.136-9; F. Hollstein et al, Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, Amsterdam, 1949- , vols.II, VII, XXVII, XXXI. Van Somer was in England in 1686 (H. M. Hake, 'Some Contemporary Records Relating to Francis Place', Walp. X, 1921-2, p.65). Other possible visitors were Wallerant Vaillant ('The Vertue Note Books I', Walp. XVIII, p.33) and Jacob Gole (Alexander, op.cit., p.139).

[40] For an advertisement for Dutch prints by Arthur Tooker see Alexander Browne, Ars Pictoria, London, 1675, p. before plates; for those by Robert Walton (1686) and John Garrett see L. Rostenberg, English Publishers in the Graphic Arts 1599-1700, New York, 1963, pp.46, 76.

[41] For e.g.s by Vaillant, Gole and Jan Verkolje see Alexander, 'Dutch Mezzotint', pp.135-139. That the links were reciprocal is shown by the Quaker Meeting/Quaakers Vergadering engraved by Carel Allardt in Amsterdam after a painting by Heemskerk 'Pinxit Londini' (B.M. Satires, no.155).

[42] Among the most important engravers were John Smith and Isaac Beckett. Early e.g.s are Francis Place's 1667 prints after Teniers and Brouwer (R. Tyler, Francis Place 1647-1728, York City Art Gallery, 1971, nos.93 & 117).

Dutch genre inspired English imitators, including the Kentish painters Francis le Piper, who painted in Heemskerk's manner, and Thomas Pembroke, a pupil of Laroon.[43] The 1689-92 catalogues at times give genre subjects to unknown artists with English names like 'Walker' and 'Hudson'. Of 3860 genre paintings listed, however, only nine are attributed to painters known to be English or who have English names, including two to Le Piper and one to Pembroke. While more English painters may have been involved it seems that their names carried little selling power, and that any role they played was limited to imitating, copying and forging. All but 51 of the 1700 attributed genre paintings were given to Netherlandish painters.[44]

The Ogdens attribute the boom in sales between 1689 and 1692[45] to an easing of the laws banning the import of pictures, especially from the United Provinces, after William and Mary acceded in 1688.[46] Ann Meadows, however, argues that the restrictions remained and that most of the pictures in the sales were already in England, whether imported as private goods or painted here. She attributes the boom to a general rage for speculation in which art was caught up.[47] Since the accuracy of the attributions in the catalogues is uncertain they can give no more than a rough guide, but their evidence favours Meadows. Of the 1700 attributed genre paintings 1152 (67.8%) were painted by artists who lived in England,

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[43] See Bainbrigg Buckeridge, 'An Essay towards an English School of Painters', in de Piles, Art of Painting, pp.454-5, 452. One William Brasier may also have painted low genre. Waterhouse, The Dictionary of 16th and 17th Century British Painters, Woodbridge, 1988, p.35, illustrates a trompe-l'oeil including a genre print lettered 'W. Brasier invt.'. No reference to a picture by Brasier in a sale catalogue is known to me.

[44] 236 of the paintings were said to be 'after' another painter; 1924 were unattributed, of which 274 were said to be by unnamed Dutch painters.

[45] The pattern of survival of catalogues is roughly consistent with the incidence of advertisements of sales in The London Gazette.

[46] English Taste, p.88; cf. Pears, Discovery, p.53.

[47] 'Collecting', pp.48-56.

506 (29.8%) by Netherlandish painters not known to have come to England, and 42 by painters from other countries. The first number probably exaggerates the number of works painted in England since it does not take into account pictures painted by visitors while still in the Netherlands. On the other hand, it seems likely that most of the unattributed works were painted by obscure artists in England rather than imported. By far the commonest attribution was that to the immigrant Heemskerk(s), who accounted for 885 pictures: 22.9% of all genre paintings and 52.1% of all attributed genre.[48] That over a quarter of attributed genre paintings were given to non-visitors, however, suggests that Meadows is wrong to dismiss the importance of imports. Given that pictures did cross the North Sea it is unlikely that the flow did not increase to meet the rising demand. Pears cites catalogues which advertise pictures newly arrived from abroad, and Meadows admits that sales declined in Holland between 1689 and 1693, suggesting that the English boom was attracting Dutch pictures.[49] The evidence thus suggests that, while most Dutch genre pictures in England were painted within the country, many were also imported.

The catalogues also suggest that Robert Raines is wrong to argue that interest in genre in late seventeenth-century England was only 'lukewarm'. 10.78% of the 35797 pictures listed in the catalogues are of genre subjects, a percentage higher than that achieved by genre in sales at any time in the next two centuries. More works are given to Heemskerk than to any other artist, 2.47% of all pictures (1.81% if Old Heemskerk is counted separately). Whether he presided over a workshop, as Raines suggests,[50]

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[48] This number includes 238 pictures given to 'Old Heemskerk' who, it is argued in Appendix II, may have been a separate painter.

[49] Pears, Discovery, p.53; Meadows, 'Collecting', pp.70-1.

[50] 'Notes on Egbert van Heemskerck and the English Taste for Genre', Walp. LIII, 1987, pp.130, 126-7.

or whether the number of paintings attributed to him is to be explained by forgeries and dubious attributions,[51] his works were highly popular.

The growing availability of Dutch genre on the open market was matched by a rise in the patronage of Dutch art, examples of which will be given in later chapters. While their own taste echoed that of the court of Louis XIV, William and Mary's arrival inspired a new migration of Dutch artists to England. There were fewer genre painters than in the first wave of visitors but Schalken and Vergazoon were among the new arrivals. The courtiers who accompanied William also bought Dutch paintings with them.[52] That the Netherlands might still be used as a training ground for English artists is suggested by the decision of one Mr Howard in 1697 to send his son to Holland to learn to paint.[53] The man charged with his protection, the diplomat Matthew Prior, himself collected Dutch art.[54] Interest in Dutch painting is also reflected in the literature of art. In 1675 Alexander Browne proposed to publish a translation of Van Mander's Schilder-Boeck.[55] Although the project was aborted a surviving fragment, which consists of the lives of the Van Eycks, suggests that Browne began with the volume of the Schilder-Boeck devoted to Netherlandish art. Unlike Peacham, therefore, he was interested in what Van Mander had to say about northern painters.[56] The translation would have given a literary dimension and a consequent measure of respectability to the study of Dutch art. A

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51 In 1705 Hadrian Beverland included Heemskerk (and Laroon) in a list of artists whose works, while supposedly common, were rarely originals (B.M. MS Sloane 1985, fol.4r, cit the Ogdens, English Taste, p.93).

52 See Waterhouse, 'British Collections', pp.140-1.

53 H.MSS.C.: Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath III, Hereford, 1908, pp.110-1.

54 His inventory, taken 18 October 1721, (B. M. Add. MS 32683, fols. 1r.-2r) included genre by Dow, Teniers and Ryckaert.

55 Ars Pictoria, London, 1675, Appendix, p.38 (not in the 1669 1st ed.).

56 The relic is bound in George Vertue, Notebook A.c., B.M. Add. MS. 23,075, ff.68r-73v. Vertue identified the author through the by-line 'AB'.

slighter work devoted to the lives of Netherlandish artists, The True Effigies of the Most Eminent Painters (1694), included lives of Teniers, Ryckaert and Brouwer translated from those written by the Flemish writer Cornelis de Bie.[57]

Interest in Dutch painting did not, however, shake belief in the supremacy of Italian art.[58] Indeed, the decades after 1650 saw the first recorded attempts by Englishmen to underline this belief by denigrating Dutch art. In 1669 William Aglionby described Dutch art lovers as going to Italy, 'where are the best Masters of the world; and by these means good Pictures are very common here'.[59] Earlier, Charles II informed the States that, with regard to their prospective gift, he preferred Italian pictures and antique sculpture.[60] Such comments were, however, rare. It is likely that before the 1680s foreign art of any sort was still too scarce to allow purchasers to make dogmatic choices between schools.

During the 1680s and 1690s, however, this situation began to change as the number of pictures imported grew, the auction houses became more vital, and, after 1710, dealers began to visit the continent to buy pictures.[61] The increasing availability of art led to a demand for firmer principles for taste, both from new collectors anxious for guidance and from more elevated collectors looking for standards to distance themselves from the common herd.[62] The moment is caught in James Wright's Country

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57 Het Gulden Cabinet van de Edele Vry Schilder-Const, Antwerp, 1661.

58 On 3 October 1662 Evelyn wrote of John Michael Wright that 'having lived long at Rome [he] was esteemed a good Painter' (Diary, pp.445-6).

59 The Present State of the United Provinces of the Low-Countries, London, 1669, p.224.

60 A.-M. S. Logan, The `Cabinet' of the Brothers Gerard and Jan Reynst, Amsterdam, 1979, p.75.

61 Pears, Discovery, p.72.

62 Cf. ibid., pp.160-3.

Conversations, in which a novice connoisseur begs a collector for rules 'whereby to judge of the Great Masters, and their several and peculiar Manners'. The collector responds by translating passages by Du Fresnoy.[63] Others also looked to continental theory for more rigorous standards for the judging of art, leading to a rash of translations and adaptions between 1685 and 1710. English writers also began to produce their own works informed by continental models, offering tighter rules for taste than those observed during the seventeeth century. The eclecticism advanced by earlier writers was superceded by the ideal of the connoisseur, expressing his taste as much by what he rejected as by what he bought. By 1706 this notion was sufficiently well established to allow Buckeridge to claim that collections 'injudiciously made are the sport and contempt of the Spectator and a Reflection on the Owner'.[64]

English writers thus inherited the paradigmatic belief of continental theorists in the inferiority of Dutch art, a belief which they then adapted to English circumstances. I will assess this process in two chapters, focusing on low and high genre. While this distinction had not always been made[65] it was in use by the 1690s, when writers saw low and high genre as posing different problems, respectively those of subject matter and execution.[66] Indeed, the sharpening of the distinction between low and high was one result of the attempt to establish firmer rules for taste.

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63 Country Conversations, London, 1694, pp.56-75.

64 Dedication (to Robert Child), in de Piles, Art of Painting, p.2.

65 Evelyn, describing the Dutch Gift to Charles II, mentions 'pieces of Drolerie...painted by Douce' (Diary, p.413, 6 Dec. 1660). For later writers 'drollerie' indicated low genre, while Dou the quintessential painter of high genre.

66 The two issues were encapsulated by Richard Steele, who thought Dutch painters supreme for 'Drolls and a neat finished manner of Working'. See The Spectator, Oxford, 1965, IV, p.496 (no.555, 6 Dec. 1712).

Chapter II

The Droll: the Discourse of Literary Theory

The Appeal of Low Genre in Late Seventeenth-Century England

Low genre seems to have had a wide social appeal in the later seventeenth century. On the one hand, low genre prints were cheap. Most were poorly executed in comparison to prints after portraits and history paintings. An exception, the large (17" x 15") and elaborate 'Presbyterian Conventicle' by Paul van Somer after Laroon (pl.5), is priced at 6d. in one state, so most low genre prints, which were less than half the size and cruder, presumably sold for less.[1] This placed them in the same price range as chapbooks, which sold for between 2d. and 6d. Margaret Spufford[2] has argued that even those on low incomes were able to afford such items: between 1700 and 1710 the average day wage of building labourers was about 16d.[3] Mezzotints after Heemskerk show prints or drawings of caricatured faces stuck to the walls of alehouses,[4] and low genre prints may have been put to similar use. According to Buckeridge Le Piper made drawings for alehouses.[5] Tavern art was an old English tradition,[6] and the new Dutch

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1 An example of this state is in the library, Friends' House, London.

2 Small Books and Pleasant Histories, London, 1981, p.48.

3 See The Agrarian History of England and Wales, V: 1640-1750 II (ed. J. Thirsk), Cambridge, 1985, pp.877-8.

4 E.g. the Back Gammon Players (B.M.). The device is common in Dutch genre but this need not mean that the practice was not followed in England.

5 'Essay', p.454.

6 See S. C. Chew, The Pilgrimage of Life, New Haven & London, 1962, pp.258-64. Relics of this tradition are the crudely-painted pictures of drinkers now at Blair Castle, collection of the Duke of Atholl, reputed to have come from an alehouse on the Isle of Man in the mid-eighteenth century.

genre prints may have perpetuated it. Low genre paintings may also have hung in taverns and coffee shops,[7] as is suggested by a picture of a coffee shop interior (pls.6 & 7). In 1710 a writer observed that 'to the well furnishing a House, Pieces of Paint (wherein the Pencil hath naturally described Anticks and Mimmicks) are as much valued by the Curious, as some Originals of renowned Faces', indicating that comical pictures, presumably genre pieces, were now as popular as portraits in private houses.[8] The writer does not indicate the social level of 'the Curious', but Dutch genre paintings were too expensive for the poor, most costing several pounds.[9]

Low genre did not, however, only appeal to the lower end of the market. Pepys owned over thirty prints after Dutch genre paintings, as well as nine grotesque heads after Le Piper.[10] Another surviving collection, that of Henry Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church, includes many low genre prints by Smith as well as imported prints.[11] Heemskerk worked for

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[7] Inventories record pictures in alehouses (see P. Clark, The English Alehouse, London, 1983, p.198). A later example is a picture by Heemskerk of 'a Dutch wake' hanging in a Clerkenwell tavern in 1813 (see R. Paulson, Hogarth, His Life, Art and Times, New Haven & London, 1971, I, p.29).

[8] The Quakers Art of Courtship, London, 1710, Preface (n.p.).

[9] The cheapest price recorded for a genre painting around the turn of the century was the eight shillings paid for a work by Brouwer in Streeter's sale (1711) (V. & A. Sales, I, p.484, lot 44); the most expensive the £31 paid for a work by Brouwer in Lely's sale, 18 April 1682 (H.MSS.C.: The Manuscripts of the Marquis of Ailesbury, London, 1898, p.180). More typical were James Graham's sale (6 March 1712), in which genre painted in England by Heemskerk and Laroon fetched about four pounds, imported genre between ten and twenty pounds (ibid., p.204); the inventory of William Cartwright (1680s), in which low genre pieces are valued between ten shillings and ten pounds (reprinted in Mr. Cartwright's Pictures, Dulwich Picture Gallery exhib. cat., 1987, pp.20-7); and Adriaen Beverland's c.1705 inventory, in which works by Heemskerk and Laroon were valued at between three and ten pounds (B.M. Sloane MS 1985, fols.1r-3r).

[10] Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College Cambridge III i, Prints and Drawings: General (ed. A. W. Aspitall), London, 1980, pp.36, 216-34.

[11] Most of his genre prints are in volumes P and Z. For cursory studies see C. Dodgson, 'The Aldrich Collection in Christ Church Library, Oxford', Print Collector's Quarterly XXVIII, 1941, pp.57-83; W. G. Hiscock, 'The Aldrich Engravings in Christ Church Library, Oxford', Connoisseur

John Wilmot, Lord Rochester,[12] and Sir Thomas Willoughby probably commissioned pictures by him for his refurbishment of Woollaton Hall in the 1690s.[13] Willoughby may also have bought a genre piece from Roestraten,[14] who in addition painted six genre subjects for Lord Clifford (pl.8).[15] In the 1670s the Earl of Lauderdale bought pictures by Wyck for Ham House (pl.9).[16] The Earl of Sunderland may have patronised Vergazoon, two of whose low genre pieces remain at Althorp.[17] Other collectors a little lower down the social scale also bought low genre: the politician Thomas Blathwayt, the Dutch visitor and sometime dealer Adriaen Beverland and the architect Henry Bell all owned works by Heemskerk.[18] The painter Prosper Lankrink's sale in 1693 included eighteen low genre paintings,[19] but the largest collection of low genre known from this period was that of the actor William Cartwright, whose thirty low genre paintings, thirteen of them by Heemskerk, made up an eighth of his collection.[20] His inventory

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CXIV, 1944, pp.92-8.

[12] Buckeridge, 'Essay', p.429.

[13] The six pictures by Heemskerk which survive in the collection of Willoughby's descendent, Lord Middleton, at Birdsall have the look of works designed to meet a decorative scheme. They are of identical size and in identical frames, frames shared by landscapes by Siberechts also at Birdsall which were certainly commissioned by Willoughby. I am grateful to Lord Middleton for letting me see the pictures, and for his helpful observations about the refurbishment of Woollaton.

[14] A Philosopher in His Study by Roestraten was sold by Willoughby's descendant, Lord Middleton, at Christie's, 15 May 1925, lot 157.

[15] For three of them, still at Ugbrooke in the collection of the present Lord Clifford, see Millar, Age of Charles II, nos. 216, 220, 225.

[16] See P. Thornton & M. Tomlin, The Furnishing and Decoration of Ham House, London, 1980, pp.66, 76.

[17] See K. J. Garlick, 'A Catalogue of Pictures at Althorp', Walp. XLV, 1974-6, p.86.

[18] For Blathwayt see his c.1700 'Catalogue of Pictures', Gloucester, Gloucs. County Records Office, MS D1799 E277/8; for the three pictures by the Heemskerks 'Sen.' and 'Junr.' left by Bell in 1711 see H. M. Colvin & L. M. Wodehouse, 'Henry Bell of King's Lynn', Architectural History IV, 1961, p.61. Beverland also owned two works by Laroon (B.M. Sloane MS 1985, fols.1r-5v).

[19] Reprinted in T. Borenius, 'P. H. Lankrink's Collection', Burl. LXXXVI, 1945, pp.28-35.

[20] Mr. Cartwright's Pictures, pp.20-7.

dates from the 1680s, confirming Meadows' belief that genre was widely available before the explosion of sales in 1689.

This evidence further contradicts Raines' claim that English interest in genre was lukewarm. He does admit that genre may have been more popular among the largely undocumented 'lower Rank of Virtuosi' who Buckeridge cites as admirers of Heemskerk[21] and whose numbers included Cartwright. Some of these virtuosi may have bought pictures on a vast scale. The merchant Elihu Yale's sales of 1721-3 included around five thousand pictures, five hundred of them Dutch genre paintings.[22] Only a few were attributed, implying that most were low quality works. Yale presumably bought his pictures after 1699, when he returned from India,[23] perhaps exploiting the slump in the picture market which followed the 1689-92 boom.

The nature of the appeal of low genre in late seventeenth-century England is hard to define, given the lack of recorded opinion prior to the theoretical works written around 1700. Even these works, Buckeridge's 'Essay' excepted, probably owed more to continental theory than to English attitudes. Such comments as do survive show that low genre paintings were, above all, seen as comical. They were usually called 'drolleries' or 'drolls', a term which became more common in the 1640s and 50s, perhaps after English exposure to Dutch nomenclature during the Interregnum. While Evelyn in 1641 felt he had to explain that drolleries were pictures of 'clowns', by 1658 Sanderson was using the word as a generic term for a low sort of painting, describing literal copying as 'the common drole way of

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21 'Essay', p.429.

22 The sales were performed at Yale's house in Ormond St. on 14 Dec. 1721; 31 Jan.-6 Feb. 1722; 15-21 Nov. 1722; 31 Jan. 1723; and 12-15 March 1723 (see B.L. S.C.237 (7, 5); S.C.331 (16); S.C.332 (7); S.C.307 (6)).

23 Dictionary of National Biography, s.v. 'Yale'.

ordinary Painters'.[24] Pepys put most of his Dutch genre prints in a section called 'Anticks and Drolls'.[25] Buckeridge wrote that Boon tried to 'raise Mirth', and calls Heemskerk a 'Gross and Comical Genius'.[26]

The humour of low genre stemmed in the first instance from its portrayal of the lowest classes. The figures seen in Dutch low genre were invariably understood as peasants in England.[27] Artistic tradition stated that the proper site for low humour was the peasantry, and even suggested that peasants could not be portrayed as other than funny.[28] This was as true in the visual arts as in literature, Dutch low genre having evolved from a tradition of comical depictions of peasants.[29] If the link between the low and the comic was beginning to be questioned in literary theory, the association of peasants and humour proved enduring: when a more documentary approach to the depiction of the lower classes did begin to emerge it was in images of the urban poor, in the 'Cries of London' popular in the later seventeenth century.[30] There is a vast gulf between the sharply differentiated types and individuals of Laroon's Cries and the anonymous, near-bestial figures painted by Heemskerk (pls.10 & 11).

At least twenty per cent of the genre pictures in the 1689-92 sales showed tavern scenes, with peasants drinking and smoking (Appendix III). A

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24 Graphice, p.33.
25 Catalogue of the Pepys Library III i, pp.218-20.
26 'Essay', pp.404, 429.
27 E.g a list of living painters written in the 1690s which called Heemskerk a painter of 'boors' ('Vertue Note Books' I, Walp. XVIII, p.93).
28 See K. Thomas, 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', Times Literary Supplement, 21 January 1977, p.77. For the idea in literary theory see e.g. Dryden, Preface to Troilus and Cressida (1679), in Essays of John Dryden (ed. W. P. Ker), Oxford, 1900, I p.209.
29 See H. Miedema, 'Realism and Comic Mode: the Peasant', Simiolus IX, 1977, pp.208-10; P. Vandenbroeck, 'Verbeeck's Peasant Weddings', ibid. XIV, 1984, pp.82-6.
30 See S. Shesgreen, The Criers and Hawkers of London, Stanford, 1990.

common title was 'a comical drunkard'.[31] Basic bodily functions are emphasised, with vomiting (pl.12) and urinating[32] common. Such themes were valued in their own right: the catalogues list subjects like 'a Man wiping his child's Arse' and 'a Sheep a pissing'.[33] Cartwright owned a picture of 'a woman in her Smok, & her pimpe houlding a chamber-pot to her'.[34] A print by Smith shows a woman emptying a chamber pot out of a window (pl.13), while another after Laroon shows a man apparently taking a purge while sitting on a close-stool (pl.14). A satirist described a Dutch artist who would 'undertake to draw a Fart / With all delineaments of Art', suggesting also the pedantic accuracy with which the Dutch were said to copy their disgusting subjects.[35] It may not be just coincidental that the Dutch word 'Drol' meant both 'something comical' and 'a turd.'[36]

Sexual subjects were also quite common, accounting for over three per cent of genre pictures in the 1689-92 catalogues (Appendix III). 'Bawdy houses' are often listed, and titles such as 'a Man taking a Woman by the Breech' and 'a Lady playing with her _____' are not uncommon.[37] Other pictures and prints are called simply 'obscene', 'smutty' or 'wanton'.[38] Cartwright owned a bawdy peep show and a picture of 'a Soulder & a wench at it', as well as similar subjects.[39] A softer sort of pornography, such as a picture of 'a Naked Woman putting on her shift'[40] or a mezzotint by

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31 B.L.1402.g.1.19 (8 Feb. 1690) lot 78.
32 See Heemskerk's Boors Carousing at Hampton Court. See also pl.46.
33 B.L.1402.g.1.10 (26 July 1689) lot 7; 61 (13 Jan. 1691) lot 316.
34 Mr. Cartwright's Pictures, no.31.
35 Hogan-Moganides: or, the Dutch Hudibras, London, 1674, p.82.
36 W. Sewel, A New Dictionary English and Dutch, Amsterdam, 1691, defined 'Drollig' as 'Burlesque' and 'de Drol' as 'Turd'.
37 B.L.1402.g.1.23 (3 April 1690) lot 324; 65 (27 Jan.1691) lot 62.
38 E.g. B.L.1402.g.1.12 (sale by Edward Millington, Tunbridge Wells, September 1689) lots 12, 13, 41.
39 Mr. Cartwright's Pictures, nos.41, 33.
40 B.L.1402.g.1.19 (8 Feb. 1690) lot 254.

Smith of a woman undressing (pl.15), was also popular. According to Buckeridge Heemskerk painted 'lewd Pieces'.[41] Laroon favoured scenes of dalliance between figures higher up the social scale.[42] These were perhaps the models for the 'bawdy' mezzotints sold by the publisher Tempest in 1686.[43] In 1709 Ned Ward described a shop by St Paul's:

> where as many Smutty Prints were staring the Church in the Face, as a Learned Debauchee ever found in Aretine's Postures. I observ'd there were more People gazing at these loose Fancies of some leacherous Graver, than I could see reading of Sermons at the stalls of all the Neighbouring Booksellers.[44]

Among the prints was 'the Bawdy Representation of the Gentleman and the Milk-Maid', a subject found also in contemporary paintings.[45]

Scurrility and scatology contributed to the humour of low genre,[46] but it was above all through the ugliness of its figures that low genre signalled itself as comical. Comical ugliness had long been part of the appeal of low genre in the Netherlands,[47] and the association of humour and ugliness was axiomatic in literary theory.[48] Images of the ludicrously ugly were popular in late seventeenth-century England. In 1666 John Overton published prints after Leonardo caricatures as Divers Anticke Faces.[49] 'Droll heads', presumably comically ugly faces, comprised almost six per cent of low genre pictures in the 1689-92 sales catalogues (Appendix III). Buckeridge associated Boon's humour with his admiration of

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41 'Essay', p.429.
42 E.g. that ill. by Raines, Marcellus Laroon, London, 1967, p.17.
43 Hake, 'Francis Place', p.65.
44 The London-Spy, London, 1709, pp.100-1.
45 See e.g. B.L.1402.g.1.73 (9-11 March 1691) lot 157.
46 'A Naked Lady, with a Comical Dutch boor' was put up by Millington, 30 April-2 May 1690 (B.L.1402.g.1.26 lot 428).
47 E.g. Van Mander on Jan Mostaert, Schilder-Boeck, III, fol.229v.
48 The canonical statement was that by Aristotle, who declared that deformity is the fount of ridicule (Poetics, ch.V).
49 See A. Globe, Peter Stent London Printseller c.1642-65, Vancouver, 1985, p.145.

'Ugliness and Grimace',[50] and prints after Boon (pl.16) and paintings by Heemskerk reveal a particular emphasis on ugliness. The association of Dutch art with ugliness became proverbial. In 1677 Rymer described Beaumont and Fletcher's characters as 'Monsters enough for one Bartholomew-fair: but what would vex a Christian, these are shown us for our own likenesses, these are the Dutch Pictures of humane kind', indicating that the Dutch were notorious for painting ugliness in the name of realism.[51] In 1711 John Dennis claimed to have drawn 'a very graphical Picture' of his deformed enemy, Pope, which he calls a 'Dutch Piece'.[52] In the same year Steele refers to one 'Minheer Grotesque, a Dutch Painter in Barbican'.[53]

The English response to Dutch genre may have been reinforced by their idea of the Dutch themselves. The English saw the Dutch as a nation of peasants, an aspect emphasised by Cromwell's polemicists. Andrew Marvell wrote of a land where 'for their Court they chose a Village. / How fit a Title clothes their Governours, / Themselves the Hogs as all their Subjects Bores!'[54] 'Hogs' plays on the title of the Dutch government, 'De hoog-mogende heeren Staten-Generael'. The word 'high' was ridiculed for its contrast with the lowness of the Dutch and their land,[55] one writer claiming that 'An Hollander is not an Highlander, but a Low-lander; for he

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50 'Essay', pp.404, 453.

51 The Tragedies of the Last Age, in Works, p.76.

52 Reflections Critical and Satyrical, in The Critical Works of John Dennis (ed. E. N. Hooker), Baltimore, 1939, I, pp.416-7

53 Spectator I, p.176 (no.41, 17 April 1711). For other remarks linking Dutch art and ugliness see ibid., I, p.135 (no.32, 6 April 1711); II, p.183 (no.173, 18 Sept. 1711).

54 The Character of Holland (written c.1653, pub. 1665), in The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell (ed. H. M. Margoliouth), Oxford, 1927, I p.97. Cf. Owen Felltham, A Brief Character of the Low-Countries, (1652), London, 1659, pp.25-6, 30, 48.

55 See M. Duffy, The English Satirical Print 1600-1832: The Englishman and the Foreigner, Cambridge, 1986, p.29; S. Schama, The Embarrassment of Riches, New York, 1987, pp.262-5.

loves to be down in the Dirt, and Boarlike to wallow therein'.[56] The Dutchman's vulgarity emerged in his personal habits, using his voluminous drawers as a 'Close-Stool' and wiping his nose on his sleeve.[57] The old belief that the Dutch were drunken persisted, despite the attempts of visitors to qualify the cliché.[58] Given these attributes, and given the impetus to satire furnished by military and mercantile rivalries, it is not surprising that in seventeenth-century English literature the Dutchman was a comic figure.[59] Dryden's reference to 'Dutch boors, brought over in herds' suggests that the idea of Dutch lowness may also have been encouraged by the presence of Dutch migrant labourers.[60] While these stereotypes probably affected English attitudes to Dutch low genre, it may also be suspected that low genre reinforced English ideas about the Dutch.

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What was it about these ugly, sexy, dirty, comical pictures that appealed to purchasers, even to those of the highest social level? The difficulty which historians have found in explaining this appeal[61] owes much to our wish to place low genre in the set of high art, a set within which the characteristics of the drolls appear as faults, not qualities. In this period, however, low genre was valued for the extent to which it manifested these characteristics, as in Browne's demand that a boor painter

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56 The Dutch Boare Dissected (1665), B.M. Satires, no.1028.

57 Hogan-Moganides, pp.10-1.

58 E.g. Thomas Coryat, Coryat's Crudities (1611), Glasgow, 1905, II, p.362; Fellthan, Brief Character, p.58; Sir William Temple, Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands, London, 1673, pp.150-2.

59 E.g. the drunken fool Haunce in Aphra Behn's 1673 The Dutch Lover (The Works of Aphra Behn, New York, 1965, I). For earlier e.g.s see D.W. Davies, Dutch Influences on English Culture 1558-1625, Ithaca, 1964, p.26.

60 Dedication of the AEneis (1697), in Essays II, p.223-4.

61 Raines thought Heemskerk's late seventeenth-century popularity 'a curious incident, difficult to explain' ('Heemskerck', p.131).

make his 'Clown in the the most Detestable and Clownish posture'.[62] Surviving comments refer almost exclusively to the subject matter of low genre, showing little interest in the qualities of execution or imitation for which it would later be valued. Historians of Dutch art have explained this interest in low subjects by arguing that the depiction of the opposite to civilised standards of behaviour and beauty acted to reinforce those standards.[63] While English literary theory justified comedy in these terms,[64] English writers on art, with one early exception,[65] do not discuss low genre as an exemplum contrarium. The demand that genre carry a moral dimension made in Calvinist Holland had little resonance in England. Unlike their Dutch counterparts, low genre prints published in England do not carry moralising captions, except when they lampoon religious groups. Moreover, positive, uncomical scenes of peasant life of the sort that were increasingly common in the Netherlands were rare in England.[66]

To understand the appeal of low genre we must abandon the attempt to approach it as high art, recognising that such a category was only just beginning to be defined in England in the late seventeenth century, and look instead at parallel aspects of Restoration culture. Other phenomena to which the word droll was applied may be used to suggest the mental set to which low genre belonged. The name was given to the lowest form of theatre, whether a comic interlude in a serious drama or a play of the type

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62 Ars Pictoria, p.19.

63 See Miedema, op.cit., pp.207-17; Vandenbroeck, op.cit., pp.79-119.

64 See e.g. Rymer's trans. of René Rapin, Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poetry, London, 1674, p.124; Dryden, Preface to An Evening's Love (1671), in Essays, I, p.147.

65 In Haydocke's translation of Lomazzo we are told that we may learn how not to behave by watching rustic figures (Tracte, Bk.II, p.71).

66 Only 2.5% of the low genre pictures in the 1689-92 sales catalogues were ostensibly concerned with images of virtue (Appendix III). One surviving example is Heemskerk's 'Grace before Meat' at Birdsall.

put on at the London fairs.[67] It was also used to refer to a comedian or fool.[68] Like the painted drolls, the theatrical drolls appealed to all social levels. Pepys, for example, saw Dick Whittington at Southwark Fair, and wondered at 'how that idle thing doth work upon people that see it, and even myself too'.[69] The word droll thus implied a type of amusement which, while low in itself, appealed to the polite, standing at the crossover between low and high cultures which were in the process of pulling apart. If, as will be seen, low genre would increasingly be included within high culture, albeit as a lowly member, at this time it remained in contact with less exalted cultural forms. Low genre paintings were auctioned alongside Italian history paintings on the one hand and waxworks, artificial flowers and kitsch paintings like that of a church 'with a Clock that goes' on the other.[70] Dutch low genre, as we have seen, may have had something in common with the native tradition of paintings in taverns. References to pictures of 'Jane Shore' or 'Fair Rosamond' in sale catalogues[71] refer not to history paintings with medieval subjects of the sort later painted by Kent and West, but to popular heroines who were also featured in contemporary chapbooks, ballads and theatrical drolls.[72] Jane and Rosamond may in part have offered a further excuse for pornography,[73] but it is

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67 For drolls as interludes see Rymer, Tragedies of the Last Age (1677), in Works, p.74; as low theatre see S. Rosenfeld, The Theatre of the London Fairs in the Eighteenth Century, Cambridge, 1960, pp.135-49.

68 See e.g. Evelyn's trans. of Fréart, Idea, p.90.

69 The Diary of Samuel Pepys (ed. R. Latham & W. Matthews), London, 1970-83, IX, p.313, (21 Sept. 1668).

70 Sale, Outroper's Office, 6 Nov. 1689, no.15 (B.L. 1402.g.1.15).

71 Forty-eight pictures of Rosamond or Jane occur in the 1689-92 sales. Among owners of pictures of them was Yale (sale of 31 Jan.- 6 Feb.1722 lot 45).

72 For theatrical drolls see Rosenfeld, Theatre of the London Fairs, p.136; for chapbooks Spufford, Small Books, p.74; for ballads Thomas Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, London, 1765, II, pp.133-45, 248-58.

73 In 1738 the collection at Northumberland House included 'a naked woman lying along they call Jane Shore' (S. Markham, John Loveday of Caversham, Wilton, 1984, p.139). Jane is naked in the sixteenth-century pictures of her mentioned by Horace Walpole (Anecdotes of Painting in

indicative of the blurred line between what we would now call high and low culture that they also featured in dramatic works by esteemed literary figures.[74] Other characters from popular literature and fable were also featured in paintings.[75] Low genre may have drawn on low culture in other ways: Boon's pictures of men with hens surely refer to some lost joke.[76]

These parallels suggest that low genre, like other sorts of droll, satisfied a desire to witness 'transgressive' behaviour thought licentious or taboo in polite society.[77] While the viewing of such behaviour no doubt owed part of its appeal to its reinforcement of the taboos transgressed, other motives, such as prurience or a simple desire for comic entertainment, should not be underestimated. Unlike similar pleasures offered to the polite by visits to the fairs or to Bedlam,[78] low genre allowed impolite behaviour to be viewed in a polite setting. It gave, in Jonathan Richardson's words, the pleasure of 'knowing the Humours of low Life without mixing with it'.[79] Aesthetic distance was enhanced by the understanding that the protagonists were peasants, and probably Dutch peasants at that, and, above all, by the consensus that low genre was comical, a belief which defused its often objectionable subject matter. It was perhaps because of this greater aesthetic distance that the line being

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England, London, 1763-71, I, pp.43-4), suggesting that there was a tradition of painting her nude.

[74] Addison wrote the opera Rosamond in 1707, Nicholas Rowe The Tragedy of Jane Shore in 1714.

[75] E.g. the Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green (B.L.1402.g.1.74 (12-14 March 1691) lot 213), for whose ballad see Percy, Reliques, II, pp.155-69. Other popular figures were Anne Boleyn, Masaniello and Pope Joan.

[76] E.g. B.L.1402.g.1.16 (6-7 Dec. 1689) lot 178.

[77] The term is borrowed from P. Stallybrass & A. White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, Ithaca, 1986, a study of the sanctioned but constrained place of such behaviour in early modern art and society.

[78] For an account of a visit to Smithfield Fair stressing bawdiness, criminality and sensual disgust see Ward, London-Spy, pp.236-70; for Bedlam see e.g. Pepys, Diary, IX, 19 Feb. 1669.

[79] An Essay on the Theory of Painting, London, 1715, pp.8-9.

drawn between high and low culture would place low genre on the side of the high, theatrical drolls on the side of the low.

A more definite moral role was played by low genre paintings which satirised religious groups. Historians have been unsure about whether the pictures of Quaker meetings by Heemskerk and his followers[80] were satirical or sympathetic.[81] While there is no direct evidence of English responses to the Quaker pictures,[82] however, their satirical intention emerges clearly from an analysis of contemporary verbal satires of the Quakers and of the captions to the prints made after the paintings. The former show that apparently innocent aspects of Quaker worship emphasised by the pictures, such as the prominent hats and the focus on a woman preaching, were highly controversial in this period and savagely ridiculed.[83] The latter attack the Quakers for the same errors and also for sexual hypocrisy, as in this caption to a print by Carel Allardt after a picture by Heemskerk now at Hampton Court (pl.17):

> Woman in Public Speaks not, St. Paul sayd,
> Yeelding respective silence to her Head;
> Shee on th'Barrels head rais'd, yet Nulls this Right;
> Raves darkly, & cries, Ah Freinds [sic] Mind the Light;
> ....
> In the mean while look where a Female stands
> As Modestie her self, with un-seen hands,

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[80] Most of the extant Quaker meetings are copies after Heemskerk or of prints after his pictures. The most certain attributions are those at Hampton Court, Saltram House, and the Powysland Museum, Welshpool.

[81] See e.g. W. I. Hull, 'Egbert van Heemskerk's "Quaker Meeting"', Bulletin of the Friends' Historical Association XXVII, 1938, pp.17-33, 57-8; F. Saxl, 'The Quakers' Meeting', J.W.C.I. II, 1943, pp.214-26. Even Raines is agnostic about the level of satire ('Heemskerck', pp.122-3).

[82] In Holland, however, a picture by Steen of a Quaker wedding is described as comical by Houbraken (Groote Schouburgh III, p.18).

[83] Among many e.g.s see The Character of a Quaker, London, 1671; The Quaker's Feast, London, 1710; Ward, London-Spy, p.80; Thomas Brown, 'A Walk Round London and Westminster', in The Works of Mr. Thomas Brown III, 3rd ed. London, 1715, p.293. I discuss this material and other aspects of the Quaker pictures in greater depth in an article, 'The Quaker Pictures of Egbert van Heemskerk: Sympathy or Satire?', in preparation.

Silently consenting to all as true;
Gives th'next hee-saint a Fellow-feeling too.[84]

It is significant that historians misread these pictures at a time when Dutch genre was seen as the realistic portrayal of lower-class life. The satirical dimension is more readily perceived if the viewer shares the late seventeenth-century English understanding of the conventions of Dutch genre as comical. Heemskerk uses an identical style and similar settings and figures in his Quaker meetings and his comical genre scenes, suggesting that both were meant be read in the same spirit.[85] He also draws on the Dutch genre tradition for the choric figures seen on the margins of two of his meetings (pls.18 & 19). These figures, distanced from the Quakers by their attitude of casual amusement and better dress, echo the upper class characters in the foregrounds of Flemish kermis pictures, and like them mediate the sordid events taking place behind them for the viewer.

Other Dissenters satirised included the Muggletonians[86] and the Presbyterians, the subject of Van Somer's print after Laroon (pl.5). Here the sermon is undermined by the woman in the foreground suggestively hitching up her skirt. The caption affirms the lust of Presbyterian woman and attacks the treasonous Scots in general. 'A Comical Presbyterian after Heemskirk' is recorded in one of the sales.[87] Satirical pictures of Catholics, including nuns, monks and friars, were traditional in Dutch

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[84] Quaker Meeting/Quaakers Vergadering, B.M. Satires no.155. Cf. the captions to other engraved Quaker meetings, ibid. nos.156 and 157.

[85] See, on the one hand, the four tavern scenes at Birdsall and, on the other, the Saltram and Welshpool Meetings.

[86] E.g. the picture by Marune [Laroon?], Millington, Tunbridge Wells, 1689, B.L. 1402.g.1.12 lot 38. For Heemskerk's pictures of Father Peters, Cromwell's chaplain, see e.g. B.L.1402.g.1.52 (11-14 Nov. 1690) lot 271.

[87] Millington, 9-10 Oct. 1690, lot 134 (B.L. 1402.g.1.48).

genre[88] and were over four times as common in sales as those of Dissenters (Appendix III). Here the usual joke was to place the religious in low genre situations, as in a picture of 'Fryars smoaking and playing at cards'.[89] Heemskerk's Monks Singing in the Fitzwilliam Museum is typical. Other pictures featuring women at confession were, according to surviving prints such as two by Smith after Laroon, lascivious (pls.20 & 21). In one the monk ogles the woman's body, in the other he seems to be playing with himself. Subjects listed in sales include 'Friar whipping a nun' and 'Friar and his whore'.[90] Also probably satirical is Heemskerk's masterpiece, the Oxford Election (pl.22), which applies the conventions of Dutch low genre to the reportage of a political event, probably James II's interference in elections at Oxford.[91] Heemskerk's ability to turn his comical style to satirical ends may have prompted the commission.[92]

In late seventeenth-century England, then, low genre enjoyed wide popularity, being valued both for its humour and for its satirical potential. The new aesthetic values filtering in from the continent at first had little effect on this popularity. In a preface to a sale catalogue in 1690, the auctioneer Edward Millington showed an awareness of the new ideas by arguing that one advantage of buying paintings lay in seeing Nature 'improv'd in its Most Transcendent Beauties'. Since the sale

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[88] According to A. Bredius Heemskerk was painting pictures of monks in Holland ('Bijdragen tot de Biographie van Egbert van Heemskerck', Oud-Holland XLII, 1925, p.113).

[89] B.L.1402.g.1.17 (16-17 Dec. 1689) lot 199.

[90] Sales by John Bullord, 14 Nov. 1690, lot 406; 10 Nov. 1691, lot 152 (B.L.1402.g.1.54, 101).

[91] See H. S. Rogers, 'An Oxford City Election in 1687 as Depicted by Egbert van Heemskerk', Oxoniensia VIII & IX, 1943-44, pp.154-8.

[92] That the picture was commissioned by someone living near Oxford is suggested by its presence in the collection of the Earl of Abingdon at Rycote in 1736 (Markham, Loveday, p.150). Vertue records that Heemskerk once lived at Oxford ('Vertue Note Books' I, Walp. XVIII, 1929-30, p.105).

in question included such items as 'a Friar and a Naked Woman' and 'a Woman on a Close-stool', we may assume that Millington did not apply the new theories too rigorously.[93] The new ideas, however, rapidly rendered the taste for such drolls obsolete.

The New Theory: Putting Genre in Its Place

Before the end of the seventeenth century the only attempt to stipulate the place of low genre were the instructions laid down for where to hang different sorts of painting. Sanderson directed rustic figures to the liminal zones of the porch and entrance hall rather than to more important rooms.[94] John Elsum favoured a correlation of subject matter and the function of the room, placing drolls in dining halls and parlours.[95] Such rules may, however, have been literary conceits with little bearing on actual practice. There is scant evidence of their implementation.[96] In the early eighteenth century Matthew Prior and William van Huls scattered their genre pieces through various rooms with no apparent arrangement by subject.[97] Size may have been as important as subject in determining the site of a picture, and paintings may have been valued for their decorative function or their capacity to cover walls in addition to, or even instead of, their subjects.[98] The importance placed upon discriminating between

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93 B.L.1402.g.1.20 (21-22 February 1690), Preface, lots 38, 279.

94 Graphice, p.26.

95 The Art of Painting after the Italian Manner, London, 1704, p.83. He followed the first English writer to give rules for hanging, Sir Henry Wootton, who placed 'chearefull Paintings' in 'Banquetting Roomes, Grauer Stories in Galleries' (The Elements of Architecture, London, 1624, p.99).

96 For Wootton's period see S. Foister, 'Paintings and Other Works of Art in Sixteenth-Century English Inventories', Burl. CXXIII, 1981, p.278.

97 For Prior's inventory see B.M. Lansdowne MS 1050; for Van Huls' sale see V.& A. Sales, pp.201-210.

98 Sale catalogues sometimes stress the frame as much as the picture, as in 'a drol in a good frame' (B.L.1402.g.1.21 (26 Feb. 1690) lot 389). Advertisements stating the sites for which pictures are suited often seem

genres in this period must also be questioned. For example, sales and inventories often list pictures of naked women without indicating whether the work is low genre or one of the lascivious history subjects long popular in England.[99] Moreover, some of these history pieces seem to have been viewed in as salacious a manner as the 'smutty' genre prints. Among the erotic history prints in volume Z of Aldrich's collection was one by Smith after a Venus by Luca Giordano bearing the words: 'Who this can view yet feell no kindling fire / Need keep no Lent to mortifie desire'.

The more systematic theories of painting published in England at the end of the century resulted in tighter rules for the appreciation of genre. These theories owed their popularity not only to a desire for guidelines on taste and to the pan-European fashion for academic art theory but also to a movement attempting to regulate social and aesthetic behaviour which had begun in England before the Civil War but which was temporarily suspended after the Restoration.[100] This movement sought to demark more rigid boundaries between high and low culture through the articulation of a new sense of decorum. Hitherto sanctioned manifestations of transgression such as the London fairs and their drolls came under attack,[101] and the exclusion of comic interludes from serious plays was demanded. A separation of audiences was desired as well as a separation of genres: droll interludes were held to draw the rabble to the theatre.[102] Dryden denounced the low characters seen in Jonson's comedies:

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to mean the size of the piece rather than its subject, as in the 'sea port for a chimney' in De Ryck's sale (30 June 1690, B.L.1402.g.1.37 lot 109).

[99] For the popularity of these history pictures see L. Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy, Oxford, 1965, p.713. Cartwright owned several examples, including a 'Cleapatra naked' (Mr. Cartwright's Pictures, p.25).

[100] See Stallybrass & White, Politics, pp.83-99.

[101] Rosenfeld, Theatre of the London Fairs, pp.1-4.

[102] See e.g. Rymer, Short View of Tragedy, in Works, pp.113, 144-5.

> Gentlemen will now be entertained with the follies of each other; and, though they allow Cobb and Tib to speak properly, yet they are not much pleased with their tankard or with their rags. And surely their conversation can be no jest to them on the theatre, when they would avoid it in the street.[103]

For English writers on painting continental art theory offered a similar decorum. This development had important consequences for low genre, which had hitherto stood at the meeting place of the high and the low.

The tenet of continental theory which most affected the perception of Dutch genre was the belief that artists should imitate what is best in nature and omit ugliness. This doctrine was advanced by all the writers featured in the most important of the new treatises, Dryden's translation of Du Fresnoy's De Arte Graphica, which also included de Piles's notes and part of Bellori's 'Idea'. Du Fresnoy and Bellori both argued that painters should avoid the literal imitation of imperfect nature, the former advocating a process of selection, the latter the consultation of ideas of beauty.[104] As the opposite to the ideal history painting he admired, Bellori cited Caravaggio as a figure painter who copied too literally.[105] He went on, however, to claim that if Caravaggio had not selected the best of nature, the Dutch genre painter Bamboccio had deliberately chosen the worst.[106] Netherlandish art was also criticised by de Piles:

> most of that Nation know how to imitate Nature, at least as well as the Painters of other Countries, but they make a bad choice in Nature it self, whether it be, that they have not seen the Ancient pieces to find those beauties; or that a happy Genius, and the beautifull Nature is not of the growth of their Country.[107]

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[103] Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age (1672), in Essays I, p.177.

[104] De Arte Graphica, pp.7-8; 'Parallel', in ibid., p.v.

[105] Dryden, 'Parallel', p.vii. Cf. Bellori, Le Vite de'Pittori, Rome, 1672, pp.21, 247-63;

[106] Le Vite, p.21.

[107] Trans. by Dryden in Du Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica, p.88.

De Piles thus perpetuates the old idea that Dutch models were poor, but adds that their error also lay in failing to imitate the best of nature. The criticism rapidly became paradigmatic in French art theory.[108]

This paradigm carried particular resonance in England, where Dutch art was much better known than that of Caravaggio. De Piles's remarks were repeated almost verbatim by Aglionby, whose translation of some of Vasari's lives of Italian artists reinforced the point.[109] Dryden, while admitting the importance of the 'many Flemish-Masters' working in England, felt that they were, 'for Design, not equal to the Italians'. In his paraphrase of Bellori's remarks on Bamboccio he claims that 'Bambovio, and most of the Dutch Painters have drawn the worst likeness'. Since Bellori had not mentioned 'Dutch Painters' it seems that Dryden had seen fit to add a type of art familiar in England.[110] Bamboccio was himself a Dutch low genre painter, but the mistranscription of his name and the phrasing of the sentence suggest that Dryden, who was not well informed about painting, may not have known who Bamboccio was, or that he was Dutch.[111] Richard Graham, in the set of painters' lives appended to Dryden's volume, also contrasted Dutch genre with Italian history painting. His entry on Dou, indebted to Félibien, finds Dou deficient in 'that Elevation of Thought, that Correctness of Design, or that noble Spirit and grand Gusto, in which

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108 Cf. André Félibien, Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres (1666-88), Paris, 1690, II, pp.190-1.

109 Painting Illustrated in Three Diallogues, London, 1685, p.104.

110 'Parallel', pp.ii, vii. When revising Sir William Soane's trans. of Boileau's L'Art poétique, Dryden had substituted English poets for Boileau's French examples (The Art of Poetry, London, 1683, passim).

111 Richard Graham writes in the dedication (n.p.) to the 1716 ed. of Dryden's Du Fresnoy that Charles Jervas had been asked to correct the errors caused by Dryden's ignorance of painting. Among the corrections was 'Bamboccio' for 'Bambovio' (p.viii).

the Italians have distinguish'd themselves from the rest of Mankind'.[112] Graham also began his book by reassuring us that he has included 'very few' German and Netherlandish painters. Dryden's Du Fresnoy thus introduced the paradigmatic inferiority of Dutch genre painting to English art theory.

Dryden did not, however, only present continental ideas as a model for English art theory. His 'Parallel betwixt Painting and Poetry' is less a parallel than an colonisation, in which painting is subjected to the rules of literary theory. Among these was Aristotle's tripartite doctrine that tragedy represents men as better than they are, comedy as they are or worse than they are.[113] While Aristotle seems to have meant good or bad actions his remark had been routinely extended to class, literary theorists holding that tragedy depicted the social élite, comedy the lower orders.[114] On this basis Dryden likens tragedy to history painting, comedy to low genre:

> as Comedy is a representation of Humane Life, in inferiour persons, and low Subjects, and by that means creeps into the nature of Poetry...so is the painting of Clowns, the representation of a Dutch Kermis, the brutal sport of Snick or Snee, and a thousand other things of this mean invention, a kind of Picture, which belongs to Nature, but of the lowest form.[115]

Dryden's examples suggest that the familiarity of Dutch genre in England made it the obvious choice as the comic opposite to tragic history painting, especially since it was already seen as comical. While a link between low genre and comedy had been made by Dutch, Flemish, German and, more rarely, French writers,[116] only in England and, to a lesser extent, in

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112 'A Short Account of the Most Eminent Painters', in Du Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica, pp.337, 231. Cf. Entretiens, II, p.244.

113 Poetics, ch.2. Cf. Dryden, 'Parallel', pp.xlv-xlvi.

114 E.g. Dacier's notes in Aristotle's Art of Poetry, London, 1705, p.57. For the origins of this interpretation of Aristotle see M. T. Herrick, Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century, Urbana, 1950, p.62.

115 'Parallel', pp.xxv-xxvi.

116 E.g. Samuel van Hoogstraeten, Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst, III, p.76; De Bie, Gulden Cabinet, p.95 (trans. as True Effigies, p.18); Isaac Bullaert, Academie des sciences et des arts, 1682,

Italy,[117] did it play a structural role in art theory.[118] This may be attributed both to the relative strength of the theory of literature in England and to the enduring English perception of Dutch low genre as comic.

The two models, that drawn from continental theory and that drawn from literary theory (I shall use these terms, even though the former itself owed much to the latter), are presented as complementary in Dryden's book. Both make hierarchical distinctions between different sorts of painting and thus offer a protocol for taste. Both agree that the best art improves nature.[119] Where they differ is in their prescriptions for the lower genres. Under the literary model subject is all important: if it is low then the work is to be judged as comic, if high then as tragic. Dryden stresses the absolute divide between comedy and tragedy[120] and judges them by separate standards. Similarly, he forbears to judge low genre by the standards of history, demanding only that it imitate nature accurately, a requirement based on Cicero's belief that comedy should be true to nature. On this basis he places comedy and genre above the lowest sorts of poetry and painting, farce and the grotesque, which distort nature and are thus beyond the pale of art. Dryden compares grotesques to a '_Monster_ in a _Bartholomew-Fair_ for the _Mob_ to gape at for their two-pence', implying that

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cit. B. Teyssédre, _L'Histoire de l'art vue du Grand Siécle_, Paris, 1964, p.319; Joachim von Sandrart, _Academie der Bau-, Bild-, und Mahlerey-Künste_ (1675), Munich, 1925, p.174; Félibien, _Entretiens_, II, p.487.

[117] See B. Wind, 'Pitture Ridicole: Some Late Cinquecento Genre Paintings', _Storia dell'Arte_ XX, 1974, pp.26-7. None of the authors discussed by Wind had any discernible influence in England, however.

[118] The comic-tragic division so dominated English thought about art that it was even used by Elsum to open his doggerel ekphrases: 'Are you for Fancy, Humour, and Caprice? / _Brauwer_ invites you to a Comick Piece. / Do you in sober history delight? / _Palma_ may gratify your Appetite' (_A Description of the Celebrated Pieces of Painting_ (1700), London, 1704, p.3).

[119] See e.g. 'Parallel', p.xxxi.

[120] By this stage of his life he hated tragi-comedy (ibid., p.xlvi).

genre should not depart from nature to appeal to low audiences.[121] His distinction works to separate high and low culture, the placing of the painted droll on one side and the theatrical droll and fair entertainment on the other perhaps reflecting the fact while low genre pictures depicted the lowest classes, they could not have been owned by them.[122] Low genre was thus divorced from elements of popular culture with which it had once had something in common. The eventual result of this, unforeseen by Dryden, was the assessment of low genre not for its capacity to amuse, but for its embodiment of the qualities demanded from history painting.

Subject matter was also important in continental theory, as is shown by the doctrine of the hierarchy of genres. The classic statement of the hierarchy, that by Félibien, does not mention genre openly but implies its inferiority to history painting.[123] In continental theory subject matter was, however, transcended by the demand that in all genres the painter should imitate the best of nature. When Bellori employs the Aristotelian comic-tragic formula in his remarks on Bamboccio he does not use it, as Dryden had, to articulate different levels of subject matter, each answering to separate standards, but to rank painters according to their

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[121] 'Parallel', p.xxvi. Cf. his translation of Boileau: 'The Comic Wit ...[may] not, as on a Market-place, / With baudy jests amuse the Populace:' (Art of Poetry, p.52).

[122] We know little about how the drolls were sold, and thus what access those unable to buy them would have had to a sight of them, other than through prints. There is no evidence that genre paintings were sold at the fairs, as they were in Paris to evade guild regulations (T. E. Crow, Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-century Paris, New Haven & London, 1985, p.47). Millar, however, claims that they were sold on market stalls ('Painting', p.24). Many of the early auctions took place outside, and so anyone could presumably have seen the pictures. By 1691, however, rooms devoted to auctions were operating and auctioneers would have been able to be more choosy about who was admitted. They also began to compete for wealthy buyers by advertising heat, light or ways to allow 'people of quality' to see the pictures for longer (sales by Millington, 22 Jan. & 8 Feb. 1692; sale on Good Friday 1691, B.L.1402.g.1.120, 125, 78).

[123] Conférences de l'Académie Royale, Paris, 1668, Preface, n.p..

conformity with the demand that all should paint the ideal. Indeed, he does not describe Bamboccio as comic at all.[124] Graham, unlike Dryden, favoured the universal standards offered by continental theory, basing his life of Bamboccio on those given by Sandrart and Félibien:

> He had an admirable Gusto in Colouring, was very judicious in the ordering of his Pieces, nicely just in his Proportions, and onely to be blam'd, for that he generally affected to represent Nature in her worst Dress, and followed the Life too close, in most of his Compositions.

Graham attacks Bamboccio's bad choice of nature and literal naturalism, characteristics which Dryden and earlier writers like Browne had seen as appropriate in low genre. He also praises him for formal qualities of the sort found in history painting, qualities which Browne and Dryden would not have demanded from a low genre painter. Bamboccio is not described as comic; indeed, the more a critic follows continental theory and bases his assessment on a painter's style, the less he is interested in whether his works are comic or not.[125]

Continental art theory thus taught that even a low genre painter should elevate his subjects, while literary theory taught that he could do no more than achieve a full expression of the comic. While literary theory saw literal naturalism as appropriate in comic painting, continental theory saw it as a trait to be shunned by all artists in favour of decorous selection. At this time the two models were not contradictory: it was assumed that a painter who imitated the best in nature would choose elevated subjects, and that a painter of mean subjects had failed to

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[124] Le Vite, p.25. Cf. the use of the Aristotelian formula by the French writer Antoine Coypel, who claimed that Raphael painted men better than they are, Titian as they are, the Dutch worse than they are. He does not pursue the formula and call the Dutch comic, and by 'worse' he means as much their 'petit goût de dessin' as 'la bassesse des sujets' (Discours prononcé dans les conférences de l'Académie Royale, Paris, 1721, p.23).

[125] 'Short Account', p.326.

imitate the best of nature. English writers, however, looked increasingly to the continental model at the expense of the literary.

Both models informed Buckeridge's lives of English painters. Boon and Heemskerk are presented simply as comical artists, and aside from an attack on Heemskerk's colour, Buckeridge does not impugn their styles and compares Heemskerk only to other low genre painters.[126] When not discussing genre, however, he is more concerned with the manner of imitation, and some of his remarks betray an anxiety that English artists, whom he hoped to inspire with his edition of de Piles,[127] would prefer the inferior Dutch art which surrounded them to that of Italy. He claims that John Riley, while a diligent imitator of nature, 'wanted the choicest Notions of Beauty', blaming his master, the Dutch artist Soest. He also attacks Flemish painters for knowing 'better how to perform the Painting-part' than to choose good models or draw 'agreeably', and regrets that Lely did not visit Italy.[128] The same anxiety would repeatedly exercise later writers.

The work to which Buckeridge's lives were added, de Piles' Abrégé de la vie des peintres, is, however, largely complimentary about Dutch genre. De Piles praises Brouwer for his formal qualities and ignores his subjects, not following Sandrart, his main source, in describing Brouwer as comic.[129] In this and in his espousal of idealism de Piles was a typical French theorist, but he went further than his compatriots in the importance he placed on the imitation of natural appearances.[130] As a result he is

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126 'Essay', pp.404, 429.
127 De Piles, Art of Painting, pp.9-10.
128 'Essay', pp.458-9, 438, 415, 468-9, 445.
129 Art of Painting, p.307, cf. Sandrart, Academie, pp.174-5.
130 Art of Painting, pp.1-2, 22. Elsewhere he argued that the 'vrai parfait' comprised not only the 'vrai idéal' but also the 'vrai simple', the literal imitation of nature (Cours de peinture par principes, Paris,

more ready to praise Dutch genre painters like Dou and Mieris for their naturalism than any contemporary theorist.[131] De Piles did not, however, think subject matter wholly unimportant. Implying that Dutch naturalism is inappropriate for high subjects, he criticises Rembrandt for copying nature without 'Correctness of Design, nor a Gusto of the Antique', and for failing to learn from the Italian drawings he owned. Significantly for English readers with their understanding of Dutch art as socially low, he also remarks Rembrandt's love of 'mean Company'.[132]

The translation of de Piles's lives made the biographies of several Dutch painters derived from a variety of sources available to English readers.[133] In response Graham added a biography of Rembrandt to the 1716 edition of Dryden's Du Fresnoy in which he reiterated many of de Piles's judgments.[134] The effect exerted by biographical information on reactions to a painter's art in this period should not be underestimated: Bamboccio's deformity, Heemskerk's 'humour' and Brouwer's drunkenness all chimed with contemporary understanding of their works.[135]

The first important English art theorist, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, looked principally to continental art theory. He offered, for example, a conventional defence of idealism.[136] In the unfinished 'Plastics' essay, however, his dominant model is the Aristotelian comic-tragic triad:

1708, pp.30-7; trans. as The Principles of Painting, London, 1743, p.19).

131 Art of Painting, pp.321-3.

132 Ibid., pp.317-9. His main source was Sandrart, Academie, p.202.

133 De Piles's sources also included Van Mander, De Bie and Félibien (Art of Painting, Dedication, p.7).

134 'Short Account', in Du Fresnoy, Art of Painting, 1716, pp.370-1.

135 For Bamboccio see de Piles, Art of Painting, p.312; for Heemskerk Buckeridge, 'Essay', p.429; for Brouwer, Graham, 'Short Account', p.338.

136 'Sensus Communis' (1709), in Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (1711), London, 1714, I, p.145. See below, p.72.

> the prince of critics...disinguishes painters into the heroic, who paint them better than the common life, better than they are in nature; the ridiculous, lower comic, who paint them worse than the common life, worse than they naturally are; and a middle sort, who paint them true and just as they are.

By the 'middle sort' Shaftesbury means high genre: 'fairs, camps, public places in modern cities, hunting matches, and parties of pleasure, of gentlemen and ladies'. By the 'ridiculous' he means low genre: 'in the last detestable and odious kind, excels the Flemish...Brouwer, (ryparagraphoi).'[137] He thus links low genre with Pliny's Pyreicus.[138] Like Dryden, Shaftesbury uses the comic-tragic distinction to separate 'heroic' painting from the lower genres. In the former he demands the omission of parerga, mundane things included without 'absolute necessity', since these belong 'to the ordinary life, and to the Comick, or mix'd kind'.[139] In an unpublished work he also uses comic literature and genre to illustrate a distinction between ugliness and beauty, choosing as examples of the former Italian farce and French travesty, Dutch pictures and Heemskerk, while examples of the latter include Phidias and Apelles.[140]

Unlike Dryden, Shaftesbury places low genre, not the grotesque, at the bottom of the Aristotelian triad, becoming the first English theorist to divide high and low genre.[141] That Shaftesbury confines the triad to high

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137 'Plastics: An Epistolary Excursion in the Original Progress and Power of Designatory Art' (1712), in Second Characters or the Language of Forms (ed. B. Rand), Cambridge, 1914, pp.99, 136-7.

138 See above, p.14.

139 'A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules' (1713), in Characteristics, 1714, III, pp.378-9, 384. As so often, however, Shaftesbury seems to contradict himself elsewhere, in 'Plastics' arguing that ryparography may become more significant when mixed with history painting as a foil (Second Characters, p.136).

140 'The Philosophical Regimen', probably 1698 or 1703-4, in The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury (ed. B. Rand), London & New York, 1900, p.247.

141 The distinction had earlier been made by Lairesse (see below, p.89). While Lairesse was not translated into English until 1738, and while there is no evidence that Shaftesbury read his book, it is likely

art rather than following Dryden in using it to bifurcate high art and popular culture suggests that this division was now generally accepted. He also abandons Dryden's policy of judging different genres by different standards. He admires ryparography inasmuch as it is 'characteristical', meaning not the old idea that low genre should make a strong expression of its peculiar characteristics, but rather the opposite, that it should not run into overstatement. Shaftesbury demands refinement from satirical art:

> the finer and better subjects of imitation, are the more concealed and not the obvious, staring, notorious faults in manners. So the finer and more delicate imitation is the more tender, and by nicest touches in poetry as in painting, and not by exaggeration, amplification, straining...overcharging.[142]

While Shaftesbury follows continental theory in his call for a measure of decorum, however, he follows literary theory in arguing that comic painters should instruct through negative examples.[143] His concern for the morality of painting will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Jonathan Richardson, in his Essay on the Theory of Painting, looked mainly to de Piles and other continental writers. He argues that painters must follow an idea of perfection, not common nature,[144] to this end drawing an unprecedentedly clear contrast between Dutch and Italian art:

> There is Some Degree of Merit in a Picture where Nature is exactly copy'd, though in a Low Subject; such as Drolls, Country-wakes, Flowers, Landscapes, &c. and More in proportion as the Subject rises, or the End of the Picture is Exact Representation. Herein the Dutch, and Flemish Masters have been Equal to the Italians, if not Superior to them in general. What gives the Italians, and Their Masters the Ancients the Preference, is, that

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that during his long residences in Holland at the turn of the century Shaftesbury both became aware of the aesthetic milieu from which the Schilderboek emerged and acquired his knowledge of Dutch art.

[142] 'Plastics', in Second Characters, pp.99-100. Cf. Rapin, who argued that the negative exempla of comedy should not be exaggerated, a trait appealing only to the vulgar (Reflections, p.128).

[143] 'Plastics', in Second Characters, p.101

[144] London, 1715, p.162. Cf. de Piles, Art of Painting, pp.1-2.

> they have not Servilely followed Common Nature, but Rais'd, and Improv'd, or at least have always made the Best Choice of it.[145]

This process of selection may, however, even give 'Dignity to a low Subject'. Richardson thus believes that all genres are answerable to the same standards, that they should all have 'all the several Parts, or Qualities'. Consequently, 'even in Drolls...there is a Grace and Greatness proper to them'.[146] Richardson's view of low genre is the opposite of that of Dryden. Instead of praising low genre for its peculiar qualities, he advises painters 'to divest an Unbred Person of his Rusticity, and give him something at least of a Gentleman', and demands the omission of everything '<u>Absurd</u>, <u>Indecent</u>, or <u>Mean</u>'.[147] Indeed, Richardson all but drops the literary model. Although he compares ideal painting to tragedy he does not liken genre to comedy. Believing that all art should improve nature, he attacks caricature, which deforms nature to the end of humour, in a manner echoing Shaftesbury's attack on exaggeration:

> painters...ought to view all things in the best light, and to the greatest advantage; they should do in life as I have been saying they must in their pictures; not make caricatures, and burlesques; not represent things worse than they are; not amuse themselves with drollery, and buffoonery, but raise, and improve what they can, and carry the rest as high as possible.[148]

Richardson's other remarks on genre suggest that he extends these strictures to all painters, not just to those of history. Even genre painters, then, should transcend the comic and improve nature.

While Richardson's remarks on caricature echo Dryden's distinction between the grotesque and higher levels of painting, they work to contrary

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[145] <u>Theory</u>, pp.160-1. Following de Piles, he also states that '<u>Rubens</u> was Great, but rais'd upon a Flemish Idea' (p.196).

[146] Ibid., pp.161, 39, 40. Cf. de Piles' belief that grace is necessary in all subjects (<u>Art of Painting</u>, p.47).

[147] <u>Theory</u>, pp. 175, 68. C.f. p.164.

[148] Ibid., p.200.

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[147] <u>Theory</u>, pp. 175, 68. C.f. p.164.

[148] Ibid., p.200.

effect, interrupting the prior connection between naturalism, low subjects and the comic. Richardson implies that nature must be distorted in order to be funny. This idea, together with the notion that even low genre should follow a certain decorum, created the possibility of taking low genre which did not caricature its subjects seriously. Richardson offered this appreciation of a painting by Rembrandt which he believed to be genre:

> All the good Properties of a Picture (of this Subject) are here in a very high Degree, and some as high as one can conceive 'tis possible to raise them. They are plain People, and in a Cottage; and Nature, and Humour must be instead of Grace, and Greatness; the Expression is exquisite; the Colouring warm, and transparant; a vast number of Parts put together with the utmost Harmony; and for the Clair-Obscure it may stand in Competition with the Notte of Correggio, or any other Picture.[149]

Richardson admits that the qualities of this low subject are nature and humour (the word here probably means individual character, not comedy) but combines this with the highest appreciation of the picture's formal qualities,[150] even comparing it to a revered Italian history painting.

The incipient subject-transcending formalism of Richardson's thought is, however, constrained by firm statements of the hierarchy of genres. He argues that a low genre subject can never be the equal of a history painting: 'a boor opening of muscles, and a St. John may be one as well painted as the other...[but] there can be no dispute when the question is which of these two is preferable'. In judging a picture's quality he claims that 'we should consider its kind first, and then its several parts.

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[149] An Account of some of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy, &c. with Remarks by Mr. Richardson, Sen. and Jun., London, 1722, p.21. The picture, then in the Orleans collection and later owned by Richard Payne Knight, is the Holy Family (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

[150] By 'formal' I mean those qualities of a picture other than its subject matter and imitative qualities, i.e. its drawing, composition, colour, chiaroscuro, finish, etc.. By formalism I mean a critical approach which places prime value on these qualities rather than on subject matter.

A history is preferable to...pieces of drollery, &c.'[151] Richardson also believed in the separation of genres, following Shaftesbury in demanding the omission of 'ludicrous' parerga from serious paintings.[152] It is notable, however, that his most dogmatic statement of the hierarchy occurs in the essay on criticism, written to establish standards for connoisseurs, while his more formalist remarks occur in the essay on the theory of painting, addressed to artists and presumably to artists of all genres.[153]

The Impact of the New Decorum on Collecting and Artistic Practice, 1705-59

The English theory of art as it had developed by the time of Richardson thus informed the connoisseur that he should prefer Italian art to Dutch art. It also tended, to an increasing degree, to decree that low genre should be judged by the same standards as other types of painting, that it should answer to a certain decorum and not simply be comic.

While the exact relationship between theory and collecting in this period is hard to determine, it is likely that these theoretical changes both reinforced and reflected the attitudes of connoisseurs. One work which sought to marry theory and connoisseurship was the first guide to European art for English tourists, that published in 1722 by Richardson and his son. Over nine-tenths of their book is devoted to Italy, reflecting the Italian centre of gravity of the increasingly popular Grand Tour. The Netherlands were treated briefly, Richardson Sr remarking tantalisingly

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[151] The Connoisseur: An Essay on the Whole Art of Criticism as it Relates to Painting, in Two Discourses, London, 1719, pp.43-5. In France, where the literary model was less important, Du Bos simply argued that high subjects were better because they were more interesting (Critical Reflections I, pp.56-8).

[152] Theory, pp.68-9; Account of some of the Statues, p.245.

[153] Theory, pp.209-13.

that 'my Son took large Notes of what he saw in Holland and Flanders, but little more than a Summary Account is given of These'.[154] The same disdain was shown by the Duke of Shrewsbury when he visited Adriaen van der Werff in Rotterdam in 1705 on his return from Italy. He saw some history pieces and a portrait of Marlborough, and thought them 'well finished, but not done after the good gusto'.[155] It became conventional to assert the inferiority of Dutch art, even when praising it. Thornhill described a history piece by the Fleming Rombouts as 'strongly painted but in a true Dutch manner'.[156] Roger North boasted that his picture of a man blowing a coal was 'true Italian', not Flemish, and described a picture of boors as 'of the true Dutch designe, who...[choose] to paint a backside of an Alehouse, rather than a Noble history'.[157] This way of writing about Dutch art persisted: in 1749 Berkeley thought a Flemish portrait 'very well painted, though it hath not the beauty and freedom of an Italian pencil'.[158]

These remarks reflect the extent to which the collecting of Italian art had become a mark of élite taste. Around the turn of the century Italian art was less easy to come by than Dutch art for those who, unlike Shrewsbury, did not have direct contact with Italy.[159] The possession of

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154 Account of some of the Statues, London, 1722, Preface (n.p.).

155 H.MSS.C.: Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury, London, 1903, II:2, p.478. He does not name the artist, but Van der Werff was portraying the Duke in 1706 (see C. H. C. & M. I. Baker, The Life and Circumstances of James Brydges First Duke of Chandos, Oxford, 1949, p.45) and, like Shrewsbury's artist, he served the Elector Palatine.

156 Sir James Thornhill's Sketch-book Travel Journal of 1711 (ed. K. Fremantle), Utrecht, 1975, p.64.

157 'Register' (1701), B. M. Add. MS 32504, fols.4r., 21r.

158 Letter to Thomas Prior, 2 Feb. 1749, in The Works of George Berkeley (ed. A. A. Luce & T. E. Jessop), London, 1948-57, VIII, p.300.

159 Customs figures show that the total value of pictures imported from the United Provinces was consistently higher than that of those imported from Italy between 1703 and 1715, perhaps in part because of the war (London, Public Records Office: Cust 3, Register of Imports and Exports). Between 1698 and 1702 and 1715 and 1723 there was approximate parity, although the number of Dutch paintings on the market would have

Italian art thus differentiated its owners from other collectors,[160] as is suggested by Buckeridge's dutiful praise of his dedicatee Robert Child's collection of Italian art.[161] Supply rapidly caught up with taste, and Italian pictures soon became sufficiently common to reduce the demand for Dutch art, as Berkeley found out when he tried to sell Dutch pictures in 1727: 'of late years the taste lies so much towards Italian pictures, many of which are daily imported, that Dutch pictures go off but heavily'.[162] It had, in other words, become possible for a collector to show his taste not only by buying Italian art but also by showing less interest in Dutch art. Gambarini clearly meant to flatter his patron, the 8th Earl of Pembroke, in saying that he 'changed many Jerman and Flanders to make a greater Variety of Italian Painters'. Pembroke, like other collectors, did, however, retain a few Dutch low genre paintings.[163] It is unclear why they did so, although the desire to represent all schools and the suitability of the pictures for certain rooms are possible reasons.[164]

The old drolls with their stress on the disgusting and deformed underwent a particular drop in popularity in this period. Their production seems to have largely died out in the early eighteenth century. The

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been boosted by works produced by Dutch artists in England. Pears, who analyses the figures from 1722 (Discovery p.54), advises caution in using customs figures from before this date because prints and pictures were often lumped together. In years when they are listed separately (e.g. 1707, 1708), however, these broad trends are confirmed. It is impossible to say how accurately the monetary evaluations reflect the number of pictures imported until numbers begin to be recorded in 1722.

160 For nobles who began to collect Italian art in the 1690s see ibid., pp.67-9; Stone, Crisis of the Aristocracy, p.721.

161 De Piles, Art of Painting, Dedication, pp.2-3.

162 Letter to Prior, 27 Feb. 1727, Works, VIII, p.177. The number of paintings imported from the United Provinces relative to those imported from Italy began to drop in 1724, and remained low until the early 1740s (Pears, Discovery, pp.207-10).

163 Description of the Earl of Pembroke's Pictures, pp.3-4, 72-4.

164 See below, p.66 n.194.

youngest Heemskerk may have continued the family style, but the few designs known by him are caricatures involving animal-headed figures (pl.23).[165] Many works by Heemskerk were still sold at auction, but he was replaced as the most popular attribution by Teniers and Ostade (Appendix I), and while his works still sold for about a pound those by Teniers often topped twenty pounds. While the period between 1710 and 1740 was a relatively bleak time for Dutch low genre in general in the sale rooms,[166] Teniers' paintings sold for high prices even in relation to Italian pictures, and were also copied and reproduced.[167] This was perhaps because his work showed more refinement and a greater emphasis on qualities of handling than that of other low genre painters. The decreasing popularity of the droll suggests that it was this sort of Dutch picture that collectors like Pembroke were selling off.[168] By the later eighteenth century, when information becomes more complete, few examples of the old drolls remain in collections. Only a few of Cartwright's thirty genre pictures survive at Dulwich, and among those lost are all those with

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165 B.M. Satires, nos.1858-63.

166 V.& A. Sales, passim. Pictures by Heemskerk tended to be among the first items put up. The one sale in this period to offer many Dutch genre paintings, some of which sold for good prices, was that of Van Huls in 1722 (ibid., I, pp.201-10). Van Huls, whose collection was sold at his London house, is a shadowy figure. He may have been a Dutch merchant.

167 Pictures by Teniers sold for £37 in the Duke of Portland's sale in 1722 and £42 in Lord Cadogan's sale of 1726 (ibid., I, pp.9, 339). For Mercier's prints and Tillemans' copies after him see R. Raines & J. Ingamells, 'A Catalogue of the Paintings, Drawings and Etchings of Philip Mercier', Walp. XLVI, 1976-8, p.68, pl.12f; Raines, 'Peter Tillemans, Life and Work', ibid. XLVII, 1978-80, pp.39-40. A faker specialising in Teniers is featured in Samuel Foote's comedy Taste (1752), London, 1787, p.7.

168 The effect of the call for decorum on the popularity of the drolls is noted by Meadows ('Collecting', pp.159-64). She, however, argues that this effect is felt as early as the 1689-92 boom, which she attributes in part to an offloading of low genre. Aside from the lack of direct evidence in its favour this theory is improbable for several reasons: the call for a new decorum in painting was in its infancy; the sales included pictures of all sorts, not just low genre; and in order to sustain the boom for four years the market must have included buyers as well as sellers, suggesting that low genre was still popular.

scurrilous subjects. While some of the drolls may have been destroyed, it is likely that many filtered down the social scale. In the probate inventories dating from 1675 to 1725 analysed by Weatherill between fifteen and thirty per cent of tradesmen of various sorts owned pictures. They also reveal a marked rise of picture ownership in the early eighteenth century. Unfortunately the type of picture is hardly ever specified.[169]

Changing ideas about what was acceptable in low genre were also reflected in the production of art. Several painters influenced by Dutch genre worked in England in the first half of the eighteenth century, including the Fleming J. F. Nollekens and Joseph van Aken, the Flemish-trained Frenchman Pieter Angellis and the Spaniard Balthazar Nebot. While all these artists used compositions, settings and motifs drawn from the low genre tradition, they omitted the squalid details, ugly forms and indecent narratives of the drolls. They also favoured a brightly-coloured, painterly manner which was very different from the murky colours of the old drolls. Typical examples are the food stalls and markets painted by Nebot, Angellis and Van Aken (pl.24).[170] Even this style of genre seems to have had limited appeal: Angellis, Nollekens and Nebot were only occasional genre painters and Van Aken came to specialise in drapery painting.

More successful was a French immigrant, Philippe Mercier, who painted traditional Dutch genre subjects in a light, pretty style derived from French art.[171] In the late 1730s Mercier began to specialise in images of nominally lower class figures, often girls whose muted eroticism hints at

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169 See L. Weatherill, Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760, London, 1988, pp.8, 40, 168, 207.

170 See C. Fox, Londoners, London, 1987, pp.140-3.

171 See e.g. his series of the Senses, Y.C.B.A..

the joys of morganatic dalliance (pl.25). He presents the lower classes not as the licensed exponents of transgressive behaviour but as a site of irresponsible pleasure to which the polite may descend without compromising their class identity. In order to facilitate such a descent the figures are neat, pretty and decorous, suggesting the common ground between the high and the low which the rough, ugly drolls had denied. Mercier's young women are often servants, reflecting the contemporary fascination, also explored by the novelist Samuel Richardson, with the moral protocol governing the meeting point of the low and the high. Such meeting points seem now to have been of more interest than the gulf between the classes stressed by earlier pictures of the lower orders. Mercier's ambiguous mix of decorum and eroticism established a language for the depiction of lower class figures which remained popular until the end of the century. Vital to its success was its abandonment of the disgusting and comical aspects of the Dutch genre tradition: in Mercier's fancies the Dutch elements are limited to motifs like the women dressing or leaning out of windows.[172]

The belief that painting should eschew the disgusting and deformed may have both encouraged and been encouraged by the 1738 translation of Gérard de Lairesse's Het Groot Schilderboek (Amsterdam, 1707). Lairesse contrasts 'modern' artists, who copy nature 'as they see it', with 'antique' artists who paint it 'as it ought to be'. The epitome of the latter is Raphael, that of the former Dutch low genre painters, with their hideous subjects:

> How are the Beauties and profitable Uses of Painting either sunk, obscured or slighted, since the Bambocciades* [*The Followers of Bamboccio, a celebrated Painter of mean Subjects] are multiplied ...we scarce see a beautiful Hall or fine Apartment of any Cost, that is not set out with Pictures of Beggars, Obscenities, a Geneva-Stall, Tobacco-smoakers, Fidlers, nasty Children easing

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[172] See Ingamells & Raines, 'Mercier', pp.49-51, pl.7. Cf. the change wrought in France by Chardin (Crow, Painters and Public Life, p.137).

> Nature, and other Things more filthy. Who can entertain his Friend or a Person of Repute in an Apartment lying thus in litter, or where a Child is bawling, or wiping clean?

This sort of painting, unsuitable for a 'person of repute', is encouraged by the vulgar taste for exaggerated ugliness:

> We even see them [modern painters] make it [life] more deformed than Nature ever produces; for the more mis-shapen Faces Bamboccio, Ostade, Brouwer, Moller [Molenaer], and many others made, the more they were esteemed by Ignorants: By which low Choices we can easily judge, that they were Strangers to Beauty, and Admirers of Deformity.

Lairesse also uses low genre as an exemplum contrarium, printing images of a peasant who eats 'greedy and disorderly' and a refined lady. This use is not enough to redeem low genre, however, and Lairesse also denies that it offers the pleasure of seeing low life at a safe distance: 'we grant, that these Things are only represented in Picture: but is not the Art of Painting an Imitation of the Life; which can either please or loath?'[173]

It should be remembered that Lairesse was writing in the Netherlands, where the followers of the new French theory had from the first attacked the disgusting and deformed aspects of low genre. No English writer condemned low genre so vehemently: those who followed continental ideas were willing to see qualities of imitation despite the low subject matter while those who followed the literary model saw the subject matter as redeemed by being comical. The notion that low genre is funny is notably absent from Lairesse's book.

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[173] The Art of Painting, in All its Branches London, 1738, pp.126-131, 40, 43. See A. Dolders, 'Some Remarks on Lairesse's Groot Schilderboek', Simiolus XV, 1985, pp.197-220. The translation of Lairesse was popular enough to be republished in 1778 and 1817.

Changing Ideas of the Comic

At the time that the English theory of painting was taking shape ideas about what should constitute the comic in art were being revised.[174] The growing belief that all painting should be judged by a single standard was paralleled by the rise in literary theory of the belief that comedy should be answerable to the same decorum as the higher genres. During the 1690s the scurrility of Restoration comedy was attacked by critics who argued that comic dramatists should offer positive models of virtue rather than negative *exempla*.[175] These ideas chimed with the 'reformation of manners', the call for a single standard for social and aesthetic behaviour in the culture as a whole.[176] This call went further than Dryden's attempts to divide low and high culture, aiming to bring even popular culture within the ambit of a single standard of taste. At the same time the possibility of taking low genre seriously was being enhanced by the growing belief that low subjects and ugly forms were not intrinsically funny, and that laughing at the unavoidable misfortunes of others was cruel and improper. Dennis, for example, attacked Jonson for ridiculing:

> Deafness a personal defect; which is contrary to the end of Comedy, Instruction. For Personal Defects cannot be amended; and the exposing such, can never Divert any but half-witted Men. It cannot fail to bring a thinking Man to reflect upon the Misery of Human Nature; into what he may fall himself without any fault of his own.[177]

The Scottish aesthetician Francis Hutcheson saw incongruity, not deformity

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[174] The changes discussed in the following paragraphs are analysed in depth by S. M. Tave, *The Amiable Humorist*, Chicago, 1960, *passim*..

[175] See e.g. Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698); Sir Richard Blackmore, Preface to *Prince Arthur* (1695) (both in Spingarn, *Critical Essays* III).

[176] See Stallybrass & White, *Politics*, pp.100-18.

[177] Letter to Congreve, 1695 (*Works*, II, p.384). Cf. Thomas, 'Place of Laughter', p.80; Tave, *Amiable Humorist*, pp.46-50.

or misfortune such as that of 'ragged beggars', as the mainspring of humour, arguing that laughter usually stems from the meeting of images:

> which have contrary additional ideas as well as some resemblance in the principal idea; this contrast between the ideas of grandeur, dignity, sanctity, perfection, and ideas of meanness, baseness, profanity, seems to be the very spirit of burlesque; and the greatest part of raillery and jest is founded upon it.[178]

These effect which these changing ideas about humour exerted on attitudes to low genre may be examined through the themes of caricature and incongruity.

Caricature

That the new idea of comedy did not prevent low genre from being perceived as comic is seen from a remark made in 1742 by Charles Lamotte:

> Painting has Wit, Humour, and Comedy, as well as Poetry...I have been as well pleased with a piece of Teniers, who deals in the low way of life, as I have been at a Play; that I have been as well diverted at some Drolls of Browyer and Hemskirk that I have seen in Holland, as I could have been at those in Bartholomew Fair.[179]

The passage is indebted to Dryden, but returns to a pre-Dryden position in which painted drolls are equated with theatrical drolls. Lamotte, an Irish clergyman, stood a little outside the mainstream of English art theory, but his easy comparison of genre with the Smithfield droll does suggest that the latter was no longer the quintessential vulgar art from which polite art had to distance itself. That role was now taken by caricature. Lamotte uses caricature where Dryden uses the grotesque, to contend that painting which distorts nature is lower than that which follows it:

> Caricature...is a representing the most beautiful and regular Face in the most deformed, frightful and ridiculous manner... This I take to be false Wit and Humour, that debases the Pencil to mean and low Satyr, and resembles a kind of false Wit and ill Taste in Poetry, which prevailed in the last Century...[180]

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[178] The Dublin Journal, 1725, reprinted in S. Elledge (ed.), Eighteenth-century Critical Essays, Ithaca, 1961, I, pp.376-7, 379, 382-3.

[179] An Essay upon Poetry and Painting, Dublin, 1742, p.22.

[180] Essay, pp.22-3. The poems are Scarron's burlesques of Virgil.

The spectre of caricature had already been used by Richardson to argue that painters should not distort nature to humorous ends, and, perhaps because of the commercial success of caricature in the 1730s[181] it became common as a rhetorical exemplum in the art theory of the 1740s and 50s.

Among those to use it was Henry Fielding, who made high claims for genre painting on the basis of its naturalism. Contrasting a 'Comic History-Painter' (Hogarth) with 'Caricatura', Fielding argues that Hogarth's excellence lies in his exact copying of nature, while Caricatura exhibits 'Distortions and Exaggerations'.[182] The concept of comic history painting sought to break up the comic-tragic dichotomy so important in English art theory, a move especially heretical given Hogarth's debt to Dutch genre.[183] Fielding thus used caricature not, as Richardson had, to interrupt the link between naturalism and the comic, but as a negative term to validate the comic-naturalistic representation of everyday life and claim for it a higher place in the hierarchy. The comic-tragic dualism, however, proved resilient. A genre painter, and especially a comic one, still risked being placed in the lowest rank of figural art, now seen as caricature. To answer such accusations Hogarth issued the print Characters and Caricaturas (1743), which contrasts the natural 'characters' of his own art with caricatures.[184] He also complained that 'painters and writers speak and writers never mention, in the historical way of any intermediate species of subjects between the sublime and the grotesque', [185] suggesting

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[181] See L. Lippincott, Selling Art in Georgian London, New Haven & London, 1983, pp.137-44.

[182] Preface to Joseph Andrews (1742), Middletown, 1967, pp.4-6.

[183] For Hogarth's debts to Dutch genre see F. Antal, Hogarth and His Place in European Art, London, 1962, passim., and Paulson, Hogarth, passim.

[184] Paulson, Hogarth's Graphic Works, New Haven & London, 1965, no.162.

[185] 'Autobiographical Notes', appended to The Analysis of Beauty (ed. J. Burke), Oxford, 1955, p.212. By 'historical' Hogarth presumably means figurative subject paintings of all sorts.

that while the possibility of intermediate subjects was beginning to be discussed, the critical orthodoxy had not yet acknowledged their existence. Both Hogarth and Fielding insisted on the morality of their comic art, Hogarth calling his works 'modern moral subjects'.

Incongruity

Hutcheson's idea that incongruity should replace unavoidable deformity as the mainspring of humour was slow to arrive in the theory of painting, perhaps because deformity was so important as a means of expression in a visual art. The catalyst, again, was Joseph Andrews, where Fielding argued that 'from Affectation only, the Misfortunes and Calamities of Life, or the Imperfections of Nature, may become the Objects of Ridicule.'[186] The idea was taken up by the painter Allan Ramsay, who denied that paintings which show poverty, sickness, and deformity are funny, since 'to all, but the unfeeling', these 'are the objects of compassion, and not of laughter'. As a more fitting comic subject he cites a hypothetical picture by Hogarth in which magistrates, incongruously, fight. The comedy is moral, attacking misbehaviour by those in important positions.[187] Changing notions of visual humour led to Horace Walpole's 1771 denunciation of the traditional comedy of the drolls. When Flemish painters attempt humour, he claims, 'it is by making a drunkard vomit; they take evacuations for jokes, and when they make us sick, think they make us laugh. A boor hugging a frightful frow is a frequent incident even in the works of Teniers'.[188] Teniers, again, is seen as the least offensive genre painter. Walpole had earlier called the subjects of Dutch art 'Nature's most uncomely coarsenesses'.[189]

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186 Joseph Andrews, p.9.
187 An Essay on Ridicule, London, 1753, pp.72-4.
188 Anecdotes, IV, p.69.
189 AEdes Walpolianae (1747), London, 1752, p.xi.

These remarks reflect the rise of incongruity and the decreasing reliance on ugliness or boorishness in visual humour. Hogarth does not ridicule ugliness or social class, but, as Fielding advises, the gap between these characteristics and his subjects' aspirations. In this he stood closer to Steen than to the droll painters. Incongruity was central to caricature itself, with its distortions and conjunctions of human and animal forms. The result was deformity, but deformity which proclaimed itself as artificial, and thus confirmed that nature must be distorted to be funny. When Swift told Hogarth to draw the Legion Club 'like, for I assure you, / You will need no Car'catura', he meant that, for once, distortion is unnecessary because the subject is already monstrous.[190]

Renewed Interest in Dutch Low Genre: the 1740s and 50s

Given that low genre was seen as naturalistic, the belief that natural deformity was an insufficient cause of humour must have encouraged the Richardsonian tendency to take low genre seriously and to look to it for the formal values also expected from higher art. That this change abetted the return to popularity of Dutch low genre in the 1740s[191] is suggested by the low prices which were still paid for the most grotesque paintings,

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[190] 'A Character, Panegyric and Description of the Legion Club' (1736), in The Poems of Jonathan Swift, Oxford, 1958, III, p.839.

[191] From c.1740 the prices of Dutch genre pictures in sales rise and their number increases, due in part to dealers like Robert Bragge and John Blackwood who imported Dutch art, travelling to the Low Countries to do so (V.& A. Sales; Simpson, 'Dutch Paintings', p.39). Dutch sales began to be advertised in English newspapers (see Waterhouse, 'British Collections', p.142). The number of Dutch pictures imported rose markedly in 1745 and remained high relative to imports from elsewhere until the early 1760s (Pears, Discovery, pp.207-9). War may again have played a role in this process by interrupting trade from Italy and France. The dealer Arthur Pond shifted his attention from Italian to Dutch art in the 1740s and also began to issue prints after Teniers (Lippincott, Selling Art, pp.60, 189).

while those which were relatively decorous and placed more stress on qualities of production fetched increasingly high prices.[192] The renewed popularity of low genre is attested by the first self-conscious revivals, rather than evolutionary continuations, of the Dutch low genre tradition. In the 1740s Marcellus Laroon the Younger began to paint tavern scenes which consciously evoke the compositions of Teniers (pl.26). These works are comic, showing peasants drinking and flirting, but they avoid the more corporeal aspects of low genre.[193] The possibility of valuing low genre for its formal qualities was explored in a series of prints published by Thomas Major in 1754. Major and his collaborator Andrew Lawrence engraved many low genre paintings from French and English collections, placing them alongside high genre scenes and even Italian history paintings.(pl.27) The low genre prints are not presented as inferior, indeed, the most expensive print was Major's engraving of the Duke of Cumberland's Flemish Wake by Teniers, which sold for 10s 6d (pl.28). At a time when the size of the plate was an important factor in determining the price of a print it is significant that the Flemish Wake was the largest print in the series, measuring 22 1/4 by 29 1/2". The noble and royal owners of the pictures were stressed, and the prints were of high quality, with etching and engraving combined to give a silvery tone very different from the muddy mezzotints traditionally used for low genre.[194] Major and Lawrence, who had been trained in France by Le Bas, thus brought to England the French

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192 In Richard Mead's sale of 1754 a Heemskerk sold for £1-17-0, a Teniers for £74-11-0 (V.& A. Sales, I, pp.60, 65). In 1737 Sir Robert Walpole asked Robert Trevor in The Hague to buy him works by Brouwer and Ostade, but only 'if they are very good of the kind' (H.MSS.C., The Manuscripts of the Earl of Buckinghamshire, London, 1895, p.12).

193 For examples see Raines, Marcellus Laroon, p.85, pls.35 & 52.

194 A Catalogue of Prints Engraved from the Finest Paintings of the most Eminent Masters in the Collection of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, Monsgr. le Duc D'Orleans.... A copy of the price list is in the Y.C.B.A..

attitude to Dutch low genre, where, at least since the death of Louis XIV, it had been highly valued, especially for its decorative capacity.[195]

Of these manifestations of the revival of interest in Dutch low genre only the paintings of Laroon stressed humour, and even his humour is closer to contemporary fancy paintings than to the grotesque Dutch tradition. The idea of Dutch genre as comical did not die out, but no longer dominated interpretations of the pictures. It was, however, liable to be revived with full force when low genre paintings or the low genre style were used in an inappropriate fashion. Hogarth ridicules the vulgar taste of the 'Cit' in Marriage à-la-mode by showing low genre pictures, including one of a boor urinating, hanging in his main room (pl.29). The point is less that owning such pictures is wrong, than that their placing in a prominent site is ludicrously inappropriate.[196] The link between low genre and the comic was also likely to be invoked when a high subject was painted in a low and

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[195] See O. Banks, Watteau and the North, New York, 1977, pp.60-105; A. Brookner, Greuze, London, 1972, pp.38-45. Louis XIV reputedly called paintings by Teniers 'ces magots' (see Slive, Rembrandt, p.143), but in the early eighteenth-century Dutch genre at times sold for more than Italian history paintings and Dutch genre designs were used on Sèvres porcelain.

[196] I owe this suggestion to Professor David Bindman (private communication). A more appropriate site for low genre was perhaps 'below staires', where Pembroke hung his Heemskerk ('The Vertue Note Books V, Walp. XXVI, p.130). Aside from the more indecent sorts of low genre the rules for hanging Dutch art remained loose. While it has been argued that small Dutch pictures were hung in a cabinet room 'devoted' to them (Jackson-Stops, Treasure Houses, p.354) it may be more accurate to say that small, highly-finished pictures of all schools were hung together. This was the case at Houghton and Devonshire House (Walpole, AEdes, pp.45-8, 65-70; Thomas Martyn, The English Connoisseur, London, 1766, I, pp.45-8), and also the collections of Sir Andrew Fountaine at Narford and Sir William Windham at Felbrigg (Moore, Dutch and Flemish Painting, pp.12-15). At Wilton, however, Dutch genre paintings were hung together (Gambarini, Description, pp.67-73). The only advice for hanging given in the mid-eighteenth century, that in Cosmetti's The Polite Arts (London, 1767, p.22), where 'comic' pictures are directed to the dining room, seems to have been ignored as firmly as earlier rules.

naturalistic style. Du Bos thought Teniers' pasticcio history paintings ridiculous and marred by 'low and comic' expressions. He does not, however, see low genre itself as comic, implying that a low style is only comical when it is applied to a high subject.[197] Again, it is not deformity which is funny, but the incongruous mix of style and subject.

Similarly, an English artist associated with a low style might be attacked for being comical and Dutch if he tried a high subject. It was to pre-empt such criticism of his Paul before Felix that Hogarth issued a travesty of the painting as a subscription ticket for the print after it (pl.30).[198] Paul before Felix' Burlesqued (1751) is lettered in the first state 'Design'd and scratch'd in the true Dutch taste', and although this became 'Design'd and Etch'd in the rediculous manner of Rambrant' in the second state Hogarth clearly intended to parody Dutch art as a whole to prove his awareness of what was inappropriate in the high style. The hideous figures include a blowsy Justice drawn, as Antal has noted, from one of Heemskerk's court scenes.[199] The audience is made up of boors, and the scatological is implied through signs that Felix's bowels have succumbed to the stress of the moment. There are many gratuitous details of the sort banned from history by Shaftesbury, such as a Dutch landscape, a sideboard of dishes and Felix's dog. With this print Hogarth sought to assert the seriousness of his history painting, just as he had used caricature to assert the seriousness of his modern moral subjects. His pre-emptive strike was, however, not wholly successful. Paul Sandby's 1753 etching Burlesque sur le Burlesque shows Hogarth painting a Sacrifice of Isaac ('A history piece...from a Dutch manuscript') in an anachronistic

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197 Critical Reflections, II, pp.50-51, cf. I, pp.57-8.
198 Paulson, Hogarth's Graphic Works, no.191.
199 Hogarth, p.154.

and scatological fashion, using Dutch prints for reference.[200] Sandby implies that Hogarth's attempted escape from the set of Dutch genre has failed. Thomas Edwards agreed, in 1752 advising Hogarth and Fielding to avoid high subjects and 'be contented to make people laugh', since the 'really great' is beyond them.[201] Even after his death Hogarth was still classed with the low genre painters: in 1770 Reynolds grouped him with Ostade and Teniers among painters of 'low and vulgar characters',[202] while in 1785 John Nichols portrayed him making a comical sketch of an alehouse fight straight out of Brouwer.[203]

We may conclude by saying that by the mid-eighteenth century the binding ties between low genre and comedy had been loosened, if not severed, allowing the appreciation of low genre for qualities other than those sought in comedy, whether execution, imitation, or the sympathetic portrayal of low subjects. More rarely the link between genre and comedy was upheld by those making high claims for both arts. Both these claims and the alternative appreciation of low genre as serious were based on the naturalism of genre. It was naturalism which distinguished low genre from caricature, which had by now largely displaced it as the site of humour in the visual arts. Satire, for example, now used the language of caricature, not that of low genre. The link between low genre and comedy was, increasingly, only revived when it was felt that low genre or its style had been misplaced, resulting in comic incongruity.

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200 Paulson, Hogarth II, pp.144-50.
201 Cit. ibid., II, pp.134-5.
202 Discourse III (Discourses, p.51).
203 Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth, London, 1785, p.7.

Chapter III

The Minute: the Discourse of the Ancients and Moderns

Shaftesbury and English Attitudes to High Genre before 1713

Unlike low genre paintings, high genre paintings seem to have been rare in England before 1700. Extant catalogues and inventories list few pictures likely to have been high genre.[1] One possible reason for this is that the demand for high genre, unlike that for low genre, remained strong in the Netherlands, so few high genre painters came to England.[2] Dutch demand may also have limited the number of high genre pieces available for export, or at least made their cost prohibitive.[3] When high-finished Dutch pictures did reach England they were treated as rarities. The auctioneer John Bullord departed from his laconic style to extol a picture of 'Flora painted to the perfection of Painting: by that incomparable master Vander Werf to be put up at 9 Guinies or not at all'.[4] The price was relatively modest. In a sale in 1712 a high genre piece by Schalken sold for over sixty pounds, while low genre paintings cost twenty pounds at the most.[5]

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[1] I have classed paintings in these sources as high genre if their subjects are said to depict 'gentlemen' or 'ladies' or they are attributed to an artist known primarily as a high genre painter. Under these terms 76 of the 3860 genre pictures in the 1689-1692 catalogues were high genre, including nine by Dou, four each by Hondius and Schalken and two by Frans van Mieris. Lely, Cartwright, Lankrink and North owned not one high genre painting between them (H.MSS.C. Ailesbury MSS, pp.179-83; Mr. Cartwright's Pictures; Borenius, 'Lankrink's Collection'; 'Register of Pictures Belonging to R.North').

[2] For Lairesse's admiration for high genre see below, p.89.

[3] Monconys, a Frenchman who visited the Netherlands in 1665, was startled to find Frans van Mieris charging 1200 livres for a picture, Dou and Vermeer 600 each (cit. Teyssèdre, L'Histoire de l'art, pp.224, 324).

[4] Sale of 19 May 1691, B.L.1402.g.1.82 lot 138.

[5] Sale of James Graham, H.MSS.C. Ailesbury MSS, pp.204-5.

The English seem, moreover, to have had only a limited taste for high genre.[6] Aside from a few works by Hondius and De Ryck only Schalken, whose works are common in inventories, seems to have painted much high genre.[7] Samuel van Hoogstraeten, a Dutch high genre painter, painted portraits and perspectives while in England. That Hoogstraeten painted perspectives and Roestraten turned from genre to still-life suggests that the English took more interest in the technical skills and illusionism of high genre than in its subject matter.[8] This interest underlay the popularity of Dutch immigrant still-life painters like Simon Verelst, a piece by whom forced Pepys to touch it 'to feel whether my eyes were deceived or no.'[9] His reaction was typical of the contemporary English fascination with virtuoso displays of artistic skill.[10]

While high genre was too costly or rare for most purchasers it was notably popular at court. Charles I's taste for small, highly-finished paintings[11] was inherited by Charles II, whose liking for Dou has been remarked. When the Dutch gift was shown at court the picture by Dou was especially admired.[12] Evelyn marveled at his technique, describing the picture as painted 'so finely as hardly to be distinguish'd from

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[6] An exception was Martin Lister, who admired some paintings which, from his account, were probably the work of Leiden fijnschilders, 'as smooth as any limning', in Paris (Journey to Paris in the Year 1698 (1699), cit. Slive, Rembrandt, p.144).

[7] Works by him were owned by Bell (Colvin & Wodehouse, 'Henry Bell', p.61), the Earl of Radnor ('Vertue Note Books I', Walp. XVIII, p.131), and Yale (B.L. S.C.237 (5)). The Earl of Sunderland bought at least three genre paintings by him ('Vertue Note Books' IV, Walp. XXIV, 1932, p.39).

[8] See Jackson-Stops, Treasure Houses, p.147; L. B. Shaw, 'Pieter van Roestraten and the English "Vanitas"', Burl. CXXXII, 1990, pp.402-6.

[9] Diary IX, pp.514-5 (11 April 1669).

[10] See e.g. John Tradescant's collection of carved fruit stones (Tradescant's Rarities (ed. A. MacGregor), Oxford, 1983, p.245).

[11] He owned works by Jan Brueghel, Poelemburgh, Steenwyck, Brill and Elsheimer (Millar, 'Inventories', pp.62-4, 69, 189-91, 256-7, 299, 310).

[12] Logan, The 'Cabinet' of the Brothers Reynst, pp.71, 84n.

enamail'.[13] Royal interest in Dou continued, with the result that by James II's reign the crown owned five works by him.[14] William III hung pictures by Dou in his private rooms at Hampton Court and Kensington Palace,[15] and sent the Dou acquired in the Dutch gift to his collection in Holland. Queen Anne is said to have demanded its return.[16]

Admiration for Dou is reflected in Graham's description of him as 'curious to the last degree; and in finishing...laborious and patient beyond example'. Graham adds, however, that his works lack the correct design and 'grand Gusto' of Italian art, and claims that his followers, Frans van Mieris excepted, are like 'the cunning Fools', a reference to lines from Horace's Ars Poetica quoted in de Piles' notes to Du Fresnoy:

> The meanest sculptor in th'Emylian Square
> Can imitate in Brass, the Nails and Hair;
> Expert in Trifles, and a cunning Fool,
> Able t'express the Parts, but not dispose the whole.[17]

In the 1716 edition of his lives Graham adds that the skill of these painters is limited to 'an elaborate Neatness'.[18] Others also criticised the minute finish and detail of Dutch art. In 1674 a satirist described a fictional Dutch artist thus: 'Parhasius the first that drew / The Hair and Face in Native hue / Was but a Novist to compare / With him, he drew it to a hair'. He also carved historical subjects on cherry stones.[19] Such

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[13] Diary, p.413 (6 Dec. 1660).

[14] Chiffinch, Catalogue, nos. 531, 546, 633, 1060. The latter, `A man and woman with a candle', was acquired by James.

[15] 'Pictures in the Kings Private appart:ts at Hampton-Court', B. M. Harl. MS 5150, fol.13r; 'A List of His Majesties Pictures as they are place in Kensington House, 1697', B. M. Harl. MS 7025, fol.191r.

[16] See J. G. van Gelder, 'The Stadholder-King William III as Collector and "Man of Taste"', in William and Mary and Their House, Pierpont Morgan Library exhib. cat., 1979, pp.37-8.

[17] Graham, 'Short Account', p.337; Du Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica, p.133. The first modern reference to Horace's sculptor, who became a paradigm for excessive detail, was Junius, Painting of the Ancients, p.289.

[18] 'Short Account', in Du Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica (1716), p.373.

[19] Hogan-Moganides, pp.73-81.

comments became more common after 1700. Buckeridge describes the 'very neat' Dutch landscapist De Keisar (Willem de Keyser) as 'of the Dutch Gout, minding little Particulars more than the whole together'. The casual reference to the 'Dutch gout' suggests that harmful minuteness was already associated with Dutch art.[20] In 1711 Addison imagined a Dutch artist called 'Industry' who defined every hair of his 'wonderfully laboured' figures.[21] In 'Plastics' Shaftesbury cited Van der Werff's Abraham, Sarah and Hagar (pl.31) as the opposite to the 'free manner' he admired:

> All false, bound up, glued, clung...minute, contracted, diminished, miniatured, particularized, detailed, little parts expressed, nails, hair, etc...No sacrifice of under parts...no elevation, exaltation, or sublime. No hyperbole, majesty...And lastly no ellipsis or right direction in the outline.[22]

Shaftesbury objects to Van der Werff's polished finishing ('glued, clung') and his minute and particular detail, alluding to Horace's sculptor through the reference to nails and hair. The meaning of the words 'false', 'hyperbole' and 'ellipsis' will be discussed below.

The growing tendency to attack Dutch minuteness, understood as both minute finishing and the minutely detailed imitation of nature, was another aspect of the revaluation of artistic values in the later seventeenth century. Like criticisms of the bad choice of nature made by the Dutch, attacks on Dutch detail owed much to continental theory, as emerges from an analysis of Shaftesbury's explanation for his dislike of minuteness:

> A PAINTER, if he has any Genius, understands the Truth and Unity of Design; and knows he is even then unnatural, when he follows Nature too close, and strictly copies Life. For his Art allows him not to bring All Nature into his Piece, but a Part

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20 'Essay', pp.439. He was more complimentary about Vorsterman, 'an Extraordinary curious and neat Landskip-Painter in little' who painted 'with wonderful Care and Neatness after the Dutch Gout' (ibid., p.474).

21 The Spectator, I, p.355 (no.83, 5 June 1711).

22 Second Characters, pp.165-6. For a discussion of the painting's identity see below, p.89.

only. However, his Piece, if it be beautiful, and causes Truth, must be a Whole, by it-self, compleat, independent and withal as great and comprehensive as he can make it. So that Particulars ...must yield to the general Design; and all things be subservient to that which is principal: in order to form a certain Easiness of Sight; a simple, clear and united View...

Now the Variety of Nature is such, as to distinguish every thing she forms, by a peculiar original Character; which, if strictly observ'd, will make the Subject appear unlike to any thing extant in the World besides. But this effect the good Poet and Painter seek industriously to prevent. They hate Minuteness, and are afraid of Singularity; which wou'd make their Images, or Characters, appear capricious and fantastical. The mere Face-Painter, indeed, has little in common with the Poet; but, like the mere Historian, copies what he sees, and minutely traces every Feature, and odd Mark. 'Tis otherwise with the Men of Invention and Design. 'Tis from the many Objects of Nature, and not from a particular-one, that those Genius's from the Idea of their Work.[23]

The belief that the literal copying of nature entailed the forsaking of beauty had been expressed by theorists since Alberti.[24] Shaftesbury's belief that high finishing was also inimical to beauty, which led him to advocate 'ellipsis' or the practice of restraint in the finishing of details,[25] had also been prefigured by several writers.[26] The paradigm for this error was the aforementioned story of Protogenes, which Dryden took to mean that 'too much labour often takes away the Spirit by adding to the polishing; so that there remains nothing but a dull correctness, a piece...with few Beauties.'[27] Graham, like Shaftesbury, saw this fault in Dutch art, accusing Poelenburgh of 'stiffness, the (almost) inseperable Companion of much Labour and Neatness.'[28] Shaftesbury's claim that close copying made a picture seem unnatural also had antecedents in continental

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23 'Sensus Communis' (1709), in Characteristicks I, pp.142-5. For Shaftesbury's awareness of continental theory see references in 'Plastics' to Bellori (p.132), Fréart's Idea (p.155), and Dryden's Du Fresnoy (p.128).

24 De Pictura, 55. Cf. de Piles in Du Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica, p.134; Du Fresnoy in ibid., p.8.

25 Second Characters, pp.153-5, 157-8, 165.

26 Junius, Painting of the Ancients, p.332, cf. pp.205, 325-7; Norgate, Miniatura, p.30; Van Mander, Schilder-Boek, I, fols.15v.-16r.

27 'Parallel', pp.liv-lv.

28 'Short Account', pp.326-7.

theory, for example in de Piles' belief that Protogenes' paintings were more remarkable for their truth than their 'verisimility', the French 'vraisemblance' which lay in artistic rather than literal truth.[29]

Shaftesbury's concern that a picture should be comprehensible in one 'united view' and his belief that in detailed works this view is 'lost by the necessary Attraction of the Eye to every small and subordinate Part'[30] was also derived from French theorists,[31] who had derived it in their turn from Aristotle's demand for spatial unity in drama.[32] Testelin, for example, argued that a 'multiplicity of little Measures' confound the eye.[33] Other theorists had preceded Shaftesbury in advising an emphasis on the main figures rather than on the parerga.[34] Norgate criticised the animals and utensils which made the elder Bassano's Deluge seem like a 'disordered Kitchin'.[35] The doctrine of the united view also prompted French theorists to argue that pictures should be viewed from a distance,[36] a belief which, in contrast to the older idea that they should please at all ranges,[37] militated against the value of high detail.[38]

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29 Art of Painting, pp.90-3; cf. Aglionby, Painting Illustrated, p.23.

30 'Sensus Communis', in Characteristics, I, p.143.

31 E.g. Du Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica, p.23; Fréart, A Parallel of Architecture both Ancient and Modern, trans. J. Evelyn, London, 1664, p.3, 10-11; Félbien, Entretiens I, p.47; Henri Testelin, The Sentiments of the Most Excellent Painters, trans. London, 1688, n.p., Table on 'Expression'.

32 Poetics, ch.7. See T. Puttfarken, Roger de Piles' Theory of Art, New Haven and London, 1985, pp.1-37.

33 Sentiments, Table on 'Proportion'. The notion of physiological distress again goes back to Aristotle, who was thought to have argued that 'nothing which is too little, can be fine, because the Sight is confounded in an Object which we see as it were in an insensible Moment' (Aristotle's Art of Poetry...with Mr. Dacier's Notes Translated from the French, p.106).

34 Cf. 'Judgment of Hercules', in Characteristicks, III, pp.383-4.

35 Miniatura, p.56. Cf. Félibien, Entretiens I, p.693. Van Mander had praised the same Bassano's animals and utensils (Schilder-Boeck fol.32r).

36 Testelin, Sentiments, Table on 'Draught'; cf. de Piles, Art of Painting, p.321.

37 E.g. Vasari, Vite VII, p.332; Van Mander, Schilder-Boeck I, fol.48r. On the origins of this idea in Horace's Ars Poetica see R. W. Lee, Ut Pictura Poesis, New York, 1967, p.5.

Shaftesbury not only believed that pictures should be as 'great', i.e. large, as possible, but even defends excessive size, arguing that when the best artists 'err'd', 'it was on the side of Greatness, by running into the unsizable and gigantick, rather than into the Minute and delicate'.[39] This bias is also apparent in continental theory, in the belief that painters who worked in little were technically inadequate and unable to work on a grander scale,[40] and in the argument that a large size is necessary for heroic subjects.[41] Shaftesbury, similarly, describes how his ideal picture of Hercules was executed with 'Figures taken as big or bigger than the common life; the subject being of the Heroick kind, and requiring rather such Figures as should appear above ordinary Human Stature'.[42] In 'Plastics' he uses the term hyperbole to describe this exaggeration, which he thought especially important in heroic subjects.

Continental theorists had other reasons for disliking minuteness, thinking its appeal vulgar[43] and seeing it as a sign of a primitive phase in the history of art.[44] They had associated it with Netherlandish art since the fifteenth century,[45] and although Netherlandish detail had at

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38 See e.g. Félibien, Entretiens II, pp.239-40.

39 'Sensus Communis', in Characteristicks I, pp.143-4.

40 Junius, Painting of the Ancients, p.314; Alberti, De Pictura 57.

41 E.g. Félibien, Entretiens I, pp.290, 692.

42 'A Letter Concerning the Art, or Science of Design' (1713). In Characteristicks, III, p.396.

43 E.g. Junius, Painting of the Ancients, p.120; Coypel, Discours, p.21. Norgate, similarly, thought the 'close, sharp and neat workmanship' of final finishing 'the least considerable, and is indeed but Opus Laboris, rather than Ingenii, yet with some much in estimation' (Miniatura, p.27).

44 See e.g. Vasari, Vite, III, pp.377-821; Du Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica, p.215; Graham, 'Short Account', p.278.

45 See Bartolomeo Fazio's praise for Van Eyck (Baxandall, Giotto, p.107). Cf. de Hollanda (above, p.1). Others noted the laboriousness of German artists (e.g. Vasari, Vite V, p.181; Sanderson, Graphice, p.13).

times been admired,[46] by the late seventeenth century its worth seemed more debatable. De Piles repeats Sandrart's stories of Dou's labour, including the five days he spent painting a hand, but doubts its value:

> Painting requires an extraordinary Fire, and that is inconsistent with the patience and attention which are requisite in such sort of Productions. One wou'd think, that the main Skill of a Painter is to do great Things with a little Work, that a Picture may seem finish'd at a proper distance; but Gerard believ'd, that a great Knowledge and great Labour were compatible, and that an Artist ought to imitate every thing he discovers in his Model at a nearer View.[47]

De Piles also records Dou's high prices with ironical care, implying that it is vulgar to thus reduce painting to a trade.[48] Félibien tells how Tintoretto embarrassed some Flemish artists who showed him portraits on which they had worked for weeks by painting a head with a few strokes.[49]

French critics were, however, tolerant of a degree of minuteness,[50] and were not entirely negative in their remarks on Dutch detail. Several of them admired the unsurpassed imitation of particular nature in Dutch art,[51] and even de Piles admitted that Dou's love of detail was tempered by a concern for the unity of the whole.[52] The limited approval of minute detail voiced in France is not, however, found among English art theorists. As with their abiding characterisation of low genre as comic, the English diverged from continental writers in their unremitting dislike of the

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[46] For example by Van Mander, who praised the countable hairs and identifiable species of plants in the Ghent Altarpiece and advocated neatness ('Netticheyt') (Schilder-Boek, III, fols.200r.-200v., I, fols.48r).

[47] Art of Painting, pp.321-2. Cf. Sandrart, Academie, p.195.

[48] Cf. Graham on Elsheimer, another northern artist able to command high prices for small works, thanks to his 'incredible' laboriousness ('Short Account', p.315).

[49] Entretiens, I, p.742.

[50] E.g. Fréart's praise for the 'minute Particulars and Considerations' in Raphael's School of Athens (Idea, p.102).

[51] E.g. de Piles, in Du Fresnoy De Arte Graphica, p.88; Coypel, Discours, p.22.

[52] Félibien praised Dou's 'entente admirable', Entretiens, II, p.244.

minute, a divergence again caused by the interference of a local discourse. Before discussing this discourse English ideas about the Dutch themselves should again be noted. The Dutch were proverbial for laborious patience, as in the 'Dutch patience' with which Athanasius Kircher showed Evelyn his perpetual motion machine.[53] Dutch scholarship was famed for its pedantry.[54] Visitors remarked that the Dutch kept their houses and domestic utensils 'clean with extraordinary niceness'.[55] Once again, these ideas about the Dutch chimed with English ideas about Dutch art.

English divergences from continental thought about the minute may be explained by the concern of English theorists with the moral and didactic role of painting, a concern which Barrell has attributed to the greater importance of the discourse of civic humanism in England.[56] The result of this emphasis may be seen in the thought of Shaftesbury, who was both more critical of minuteness and more concerned about the moral role of painting than any other English theorist. In the passages above Shaftesbury differs from continental writers in his stress on 'Truth', seeing this, rather than beauty alone, as the end of both idealism and unity. Elsewhere he argues that 'very little painting', by which he means that less than life-size, 'is false', and that it can only be redeemed by ellipsis.[57] By Truth Shaftesbury does not mean naturalism or even 'vraisemblance' but moral truth, a quality vital if painting was to fulfil its didactic role.

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53 Diary, p.123 (8 Nov. 1644).

54 See e.g. Dryden, Preface to Sylvae, in Essays I, p.252.

55 John Ray, Observations...Made in a Journey through Part of the Low-Countries, London, 1673, p.51. Cf. Fellтham, Brief Character, p.19; Thornhill, Sketch-Book, p.35. For the origins of the cliché see Schama, Embarrassment, pp.375-97. It persisted throughout the eighteenth century, e.g. Reynolds, letter to Edmund Burke, Amsterdam, 24 Aug. 1781, in The Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds (ed. F. W. Hilles), Cambridge, 1929, p.86.

56 Political Theory, pp.19-45.

57 Second Characters, pp.153-5, cf. p.165.

Writing on 'The Judgment of Hercules', designed to educate a prince, he states that 'historical and moral painting', which focus on the human figure, is to be preferred to 'merely natural painting', like landscape.[58] The distinction derives from that between moral and natural philosophy. Similarly, in 'Plastics' the proper end of painting is defined as moral instruction on the nature of man.[59]

Shaftesbury's dislike of minuteness rests, above all, on its interference with painting's rhetorical capacity to perform this moral role.[60] He values general forms because they are generally intelligible, while particular forms are 'unlike to any thing extant in the world besides' and thus endanger communication. Shaftesbury posits a universal innate sense of Truth, or, more precisely, of Beauty, which is the visual appearance of Truth. Thus, while the truth of a beautiful picture is apparent to all men, one which is minutely particular and fails to attain universal Beauty addresses only a local audience.[61] Further, if the eye is distracted by details and the picture cannot be comprehended as a whole then its moral will be overlooked. Large figures lend painting a moral dimension through the classical correlation of physical magnitude and more abstract varieties of greatness.[62] Ellipsis has the rhetorical purpose of leaving room for the beholder's imagination: 'whatever...is left to guess and results strong and striking though not expressed'.[63]

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58 'Judgment of Hercules', in Characteristicks III, pp.378-9.
59 Second Characters, p.93.
60 For Shaftesbury's views on the rhetorical role of art see Barrell, Political Theory, p.30.
61 'Sensus Communis', in Charactisticks I, pp.142-5.
62 E.g. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 4, iii, cit. Dacier, Art of Poetry, p.113. Quoted also by Félibien, Entretiens, I, p.290.
63 Second Characters, pp.157-8, 165.

Shaftesbury's attack on minuteness is attributable not only to his concern with the moral role of painting, but also to the obstacles he saw to this role in England. As a Whig he had welcomed the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, and felt that the new freedom should be reflected in and sustained by the arts. He believed that English art should be differentiated from that of France, which was not only an enemy but also subject to an absolute monarchy of the sort which England had thrown off. Shaftesbury saw French art, like the French regime, as bound by rules and thus unable to attain noble size and free handling,[64] resulting in the corrupt, the effeminate and the high finished: the 'licked manner, leché in French, the enamelled'. In France Poussin had to paint in little because he was employed on 'pieces-de-cabinet for ladies...Ladies hate the great manner; love baby-sizes, toys, miniature'. Against this Shaftesbury calls for a broad, 'free' manner, lying in 'roughness and masculine touch'.[65] Unlike literary critics who attacked the French for similar faults,[66] however, Shaftesbury could not find the contrary qualities in English art because it was dominated by portraitists minutely tracing 'every Feature and odd Mark'.[67] Shaftesbury thought portraiture mechanical, needing no education or morality, and thus unable to fulfil painting's claim to be a liberal art. Portraiture also fails to be moral, since it is limited to 'copying, translating, servilely submitting to the lords and ladies,' a submission both social and artistic. Face painters thus ignore universal beauty and truth and speak only to those to whom the sitter is known.[68]

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[64] See R. Woodfield, 'The Freedom of Shaftesbury's Classicism', The British Journal of Aesthetics XV, 1975, pp.260-6.

[65] Second Characters, pp.110, 166, 130-31. Cf. Elsum on the fresco-painting school of Rome: 'About minutes it gives it self no trouble/ Having a Manner Masculine and Noble' (Description, p.131).

[66] See W. H. Youngren, 'Generality, Science and Poetic Language in the Restoration', ELH XXXV, 1968, pp.164-5.

[67] 'Sensus Communis', in Characteristicks I, pp.144-145.

[68] Second Characters, pp.134-6.

Ancients and Moderns

If the stress which Shaftesbury placed on minuteness owed something to the clash between his ideals, with their debt to continental theory and civic humanism, and English conditions, then it also owed much to another discourse of great importance in late seventeenth-century England. This discourse, the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, may briefly be characterised as debating the value of an analysis which proceeded inductively, from an empirical examination of facts, against one which proceeded exegetically, from the received wisdom of canonical authority. Shaftesbury stood on the latter side, that of the Ancients.[69] His belief in innate and universal ideas of beauty and truth led him to reject both the empiricism of his tutor, Locke, and the notion that the moderns could make any advance on antique thought.[70] The quarrel concerned, inter alia, literary criticism, historiography and science. In each case the modern approach was dismissed by the Ancients as 'minute'. Shaftesbury's innovation was to transfer the term to art theory, thus lending his attack on empiricism in the visual arts a wider resonance. This resonance emerges from a survey of criticisms of the Moderns.

Shaftesbury's comparison of portraiture with history rather than poetry echoed Aristotle's contention that history is more focussed on particulars than poetry and thus less able to deal with universal issues,[71] but it also evoked contemporary debates over historical methodology. The Ancients thought that history should furnish moral exempla and attacked Modern historians for valuing facts for their own

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69 See e.g. Second Characters, p.167.
70 Ibid., pp.105-8, 178, 129.
71 Poetics, ch.9.

sake. Both sides used the word 'minute', Moderns such as William Wootton positively, for example to express the pleasures of being 'minutely critical in all the little Fashions of the Greeks', Ancients such as John Hughes to denounce the chronicles beloved of the antiquarians as 'a World of frivolous Matter and minute Circumstances'. The Ancient William Temple dismissed chronicles for their failure to draw any moral of use in the education of princes.[72] The Ancients' notion of the proper use of history echoes Shaftesbury's idea of the proper use of painting: the Judgment of Hercules was designed to instruct a prince, while a portrait, or a picture by Van der Werff, were just repositories of meaningless details.

Another group of Moderns to come under fire were philologists, especially after Richard Bentley's use of a detailed analysis of original sources to expose Temple's scholarly faux-pas over the 'Epistles of Phalaris'. Bentley's methods were condemned by those who accused philologists of missing the beauty and moral significance of the whole in their obsession with textual details. The philosopher Berkeley saw them as reading ancient authors with no more than an interest in:

> minute particulars which are valuable for no other reason but because they are despised and forgotten by the rest of mankind. The divine maxims of morality, the exact pictures of human life, the profound discoveries in the arts and sciences, just thoughts, bright images, sublime sentiments are overlooked.[73]

The word minute would, above all, have evoked the empirical approach of the natural philosophers of the Royal Society. The 'experimental

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[72] Wootton, Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning (1694); Hughes, A Complete History of England (1706); Temple, An Introduction to the History of England (1695), all cit. in J. M. Levine's history of the debate, Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography, Ithaca, 1987, pp.155-77.

[73] Guardian, 9 June 1713 (Works VII, pp.211-12). Cf. Alexander Pope, Essay on Criticism (1711), II, ll.243-6, 263-4, 285-8.

philosophy' favoured by these philosophers rejected both received authority and abstract speculation in favour of practical experiments using the hand and eye.[74] One Society Fellow, Robert Hooke, hoped that his work might lead to 'a reformation in Philosophy':

> by shewing, that there is not so much requir'd towards it, any strength of Imagination, or exactness of Method, or depth of Contemplation (though the addition of these, where they can be had, must needs produce a much more perfect composure) as a sincere Hand, and a faithful Eye, to examine and to record, the things themselves as they appear.[75]

Shaftesbury derided this philosophy requiring 'more the labour of Hands than Brains' as 'alchymy',[76] and would have opposed the rejection of classical authority made by the more extreme experimental philosophers. Hooke and Henry Power belittled Aristotelian natural philosophy because ancient philosophers lacked modern tools like the microscope.[77] The microscope, the unofficial emblem of experimental philosophy, was the key element in the association of ideas provoked by the word 'minute'. It was yoked with the word from the start, the microscopists themselves using the term to describe their research. For the Ancients it furnished the perfect figure for an approach which, in its myopic focus on detail, failed to see the wider whole. As a result microscopic vision became an important trope in literary and philosophical writings for the next century.[78]

Attacks on the microscopists focussed on their fascination with disgusting and trivial subjects like fleas and 'Mites in Cheese'.[79] Mites

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[74] For the rise of experimental philosophy and its Baconian origins see R. F. Jones, Ancients and Moderns, St. Louis, 1961, passim.

[75] Micrographia, London, 1665, Preface (n.p.).

[76] 'The Moralists' (1709), in Characteristics II, pp.189, 184.

[77] Power, Experimental Philosophy, London, 1664, Preface (n.p.); Hooke, Micrographia, Preface (n.p.).

[78] See M. H. Nicolson, 'The Microscope and English Imagination', Smith College Studies in Modern Languages XVI, 1935, passim.

[79] Power, Experimental Philosophy, pp.9-10, 16-17.

in cheese became a metaphor for boring trivia.[80] The virtuosi who aped the Royal Society were lampooned for preferring such subjects to the study of man. Gimcrack, Shadwell's comic virtuoso, thought it 'below a Virtuoso to trouble himself with Men and Manners. I study Insects'.[81] Shaftesbury, agreed that when such a 'minute Examine[r] of Nature's Works' turns from the wider community of man and 'proceeds with equal or perhaps superiour Zeal in the contemplation of the Insect-Life' he becomes risible.[82] The microscope was also accused of exposing disgusting minutiae. This belief was perhaps fostered by the large, minutely-detailed engravings in which Hooke reproduced his tiny subjects. Fleas, however, were already loathsome: more disturbing was the realisation that works of art and the human form, beautiful when viewed as a whole from a distance, might appear similarly disgusting when seen through the microscope. According to Bentley, here siding with the Ancients, microscopic vision:

> would be a curse, and not a blessing to us; it would make all things appear rugged and deformed; the most finely polished crystal would be uneven and rough; the sight of our selves would affright us; the smoothest skin would be beset all over with ragged scales and bristly hairs.[83]

Even the surfaces of antique sculpture, the ne plus ultra of unblemished beauty, were shown by the microscope to be crawling with miniscule life.[84]

Locke and Berkeley, discussing a hypothetical microscopic vision, agreed that the gain in acuity would be more than offset by the limitation of the range of vision, causing its owner to lose sight of the larger

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[80] See e.g. Dennis, Remarks on Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock (1728), in Works II, p.344.

[81] The Virtuoso, London, 1676, II i. See also C. S. Duncan, 'The Scientist as Comic Type', Modern Philology XIV, 1916-17, pp.281-91.

[82] 'Miscellaneous Reflections' (1711), Characteristicks, III, p.156.

[83] 'A Confutation of Atheism' (1692), The Works of Richard Bentley, London, 1838, III, p.58. The idea was most famously explored in the Brobdingnag section of Gulliver's Travels (1726), New York, 1961, pp.71, 90.

[84] See Addison, Spectator IV, p.346 (No.519, Oct. 25, 1712).

whole. Locke argued that such a man would be able to see the 'minute particles' composing a clock but could not use it to tell the time. He would also be unable to communicate with others, since his visual ideas of things would not resemble theirs.[85] The point echoes Shaftesbury's belief that minuteness hinders communication by rendering a painter's work 'capricious and fantastical'. Microscopic vision, Locke and Berkeley agree, would be merely 'curious', useless in any wider sense. 'Were our eyes turned into microscopes,' Berkeley concludes, 'we should have left us only the empty amusement of seeing'.[86]

Still closer to Shaftesbury's ideas were essays written by Berkeley in 1713, in which microscopic vision is used as a metaphor to denounce myopia in various fields. Most seriously, Berkeley feels that a microscopic world view leads to atheism. The atheistic 'minute philosophers' are accused of focussing on 'minute particularities of religion...without comprehending the scope and design of Christianity'. He compares them to a fly in St Paul's whose microscopic sight cannot see 'at one view the various parts of the building, in order to observe their symmetry and design', but only 'small inequalities' in the stones which seem to it like 'deformed rocks'. Minute vision, again, reveals only ugliness.[87] Shaftesbury also thought an inability to see the unity of the whole a cause of atheism. In 'The Moralists', the natural philosopher and atheist Philocles is convinced of the existence of an ordering divinity by a demonstration that the universe is a harmonious whole. He could not see this before because he did not

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[85] An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), II, 23, 12. Cf. Bentley, 'Confutation of Atheism', in Works III, p.59.

[86] An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision (1709), 83-86 (Works, I, pp.205-6). For the metaphor of microscopical vision in Berkeley see G. Brykman, 'Microscopes and Philosophical Vision in Berkeley', in Berkeley: Critical and Interpretive Essays (ed. C. M.Turbayne), Minneapolis, 1982.

[87] Guardian, 1 June 1713 (Works VII, pp.206-8).

take a distant view, myopically examining the 'Structure of each Plant and Animal-Body' at the expence of 'the Anatomy of the World'.[88] Experimental philosophy is thus shown to be hermeneutically inadequate, just as 'natural' painting cannot fulfill the moral purpose of the art.

The minute philosophers return in Berkeley's Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher (1732), in which Alciphron defends his sect's microscopic analysis of man's 'wrinkles'. Alciphron is attacked, however, for seeing only the worst in man, and, especially, for his denial of the afterlife, a denial which proceeds from his rejection of all non-sensual evidence.[89] Berkeley here follows Cicero, the source for the soubriquet 'minute philosophers'.[90] Cicero's minute philosophers were the Epicureans, who believed in a world composed only of atoms and void and denied the afterlife. Microscopists and other scientists were often compared to the Epicureans by those who saw their similarly minute studies leading to similarly atheistical conclusions.[91] Such mechanical materialism was inimical to Shaftesbury, since in his view it left no room for a divinity or for the natural morality in which he believed.[92] He denounces the Epicureans and attributes similar ideas to modern thinkers.[93]

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[88] 'The Moralists', in Characteristicks II, pp.282-3. French theorists arguing for the subordination of detail in painting observed that in the social and physical worlds the parts were similarly subordinated to the whole (Félibien, Entretiens I, p.47; de Piles, Cours, pp.104-5).

[89] Dialogue I, in Works III, pp.46-7.

[90] According to the O.E.D. they first appeared in English in 1650 in Sir John Denham's translation of Cicero's De Senuctute: 'Though some minute Philosophers pretend, / That with our dayes our pains and pleasures end'.

[91] E.g. Bentley, 'Confutation of Atheism', in Works, III. The title of Power's book declared his interest in the 'famous Atomical Hypothesis'.

[92] For the background to this debate see R. L. Brett, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury: a Study in Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory, London, 1951, pp.13-32.

[93] 'The Moralists', in Characteristicks II, p.357.

In England, then, the term 'minute' had, through its use by the Ancients, come to connote a detailed investigation which ignored the beauty and truth of the whole, sinking to an empirical materialism which trusted the evidence of the senses before the authority of the ancients. As such it furnished a useful shorthand for a writer like Shaftesbury wishing to adapt continental art theory to English circumstances. For example, it allowed him to qualify the stress placed on the links between natural philosophy and painting by continental writers from Alberti to Fréart. These links were contentious in a land where natural philosophy was more readily understood as the empiricism of the Royal Society than as the geometrical perspective of Bosse, especially when Fréart proclaimed the links between the two disciplines in language suspiciously close to that used by Power to attack the old epistemology. Painting, he argued, is:

> established upon a demonstrative Science, infinitely more enlightened and reasonable, than that Pedantick Philosophy, which produces us nothing but frivolous Questions and uncertainties... whereas Paynting, founded upon the real Principles of Geometrie, makes at once a double demonstration of what she represents.[94]

Shaftesbury's use of the word minute clarified this sort of confusion, divorcing painting from its prior association with natural philosophy and reinforcing its links with moral philosophy of a more traditional sort.

The Taste for the Minute: 1713-59

If the attack on the drolls wrought a profound change in the English taste for genre in the first half of the eighteenth century, no such change was inspired by Shaftebury's attack on minuteness until Reynolds took up the fight. 'Plastics' was not published until 1914, and the milder

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comments in 'Sensus Communis' and 'The Judgment of Hercules' failed to inspire Shaftesbury's successors. The Scottish philosopher George Turnbull, another writer indebted to civic humanism,[95] quoted some of Shaftesbury's remarks on minuteness but had nothing to add himself. Like Shaftesbury he compared painting to both natural and moral philosophy, but felt that the art should unite the two disciplines.[96] More directly opposed to Shaftesbury's ideas was the anonymous author of the Preface to a translation of Leonardo's Trattato, who argued that natural philosophy 'is absolutely necessary' for artists. By natural philosophy he meant not only the geometry valued by Fréart, but also the work of the Royal Society.[97]

Art theory between Shaftesbury and Reynolds was ambivalent about the minute. At one extreme stood Lamotte, who demanded that the painter:

> descend to the Minutest Particulars, as a Cap, or a Helmet...if they can serve to fix any particular Distinction of a People. He must carefully observe every thing that is proper and peculiar to a Country, the Trees, Plants, Animals, and even the Fishes of it ...Mistakes, in the minutest Things in Nature have drawn Censures upon the most famous Artists. Apelles himself was blamed for drawing his Horses with Eye-lashes upon the lower Eye-lid.[98]

Far from transcending particularity, Lamotte asks the artist to spare no effort in evoking a precise time and space. While his ideas owed more to religious fundamentalism than the art theoretical tradition it remains startling that such Ruskinian sentiments were expressed in 1742, even though they attracted little interest among his contemporaries. The other extreme was represented by Hogarth, who attacked critics who, on the basis of 'a tedious Application to minute Parts', object to the minor inaccuracies of English art and prefer foreign painting:

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95 See Barrell, Political Theory, p.19.
96 A Treatise on Ancient Painting, London, 1740, pp.79-85, 145-7.
97 A Treatise of Painting, London, 1721, Preface (n.p.).
98 Essay upon Poetry and Painting, pp.51-2.

> These peddling Demi-Criticks, on the painful Discovery of some little Inaccuracy, (which proceeds mostly from the Freedom of the Pencil) without any regard to the more noble Parts of a Performance, (which they are totally ignorant of,) with great Satisfaction condemn the Whole, as a bad and incorrect Piece.[99]

Hogarth's essay is, however, directed at the taste for Old Masters in general, and not particularly at that for Dutch art.

More typical was Richardson, who believed, as we have seen, that merit, if of an inferior sort, lay in the exact copying of nature. Citing Protogenes, he makes the usual claim that excessive finishing destroys beauty, but also attacks extreme roughness and condones high finishing in small pictures. If he recommends a rough style to achieve Greatness, he feels that Grace is best achieved by 'delicate' contours and 'more finishing',[100] making a gender-based association of beauty and smallness which most later writers would prefer to the classical correlation between beauty and largeness.[101] Joseph Spence ridiculed the belief that nothing can be beautiful unless it approaches 'the Gigantic'.[102] Addison questioned the use of size as a register of greatness of character.[103]

Lairesse gives the best summary of contemporary views of the minute. Linking minute copying to a failure to select, he attacks those who think it enough to follow nature:

> tho' she be defective; as crooked, lame, squint-ey'd, or blind: and that when she is imitated with a delicate Pencil, that is sufficient; and such is their Zeal and extraordinary Pains, that one paints for that end the Air of his Wife, tho' ever so ugly, with all her Freckles and Pimples very exactly.

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[99] Essay, signed 'Britophil', in St. James's Evening Post, 7-9 June 1737, reprinted Paulson, Hogarth, II, p.491.

[100] Theory, pp.155-9, 181-2.

[101] See e.g. Thomas Twining, Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry, London, 1789, pp.263, 266.

[102] 'Sir Harry Beaumont', Crito, London, 1752, p.48.

[103] The Spectator, I, p.178 (no.42, 18 April 1711).

He also lampoons Dutch history painters who include irrelevant parerga. He does, however, admire high genre, especially that painted by Frans van Mieris, the supreme exponant of the 'elegant modern manner'. Lairesse even recommends Mieris's minutely accurate imitation of textiles. He warns, however, that this is only appropriate in high genre, not in history, and argues that even in high genre nature must be 'corrected and improved'. Lairesse thus proposes a decorum for high genre which would make it an inferior but still admirable cousin of history painting, combining history's correction of nature with genre's truth to time and place.[104]

Lairesse's opinions reflected the Dutch taste for high-finished genre, a taste which reached England after 1710. Around 1720 Sir Gregory Page paid high prices for twelve history paintings by Van der Werff.[105] Page owned numerous high-finished works, including genre pieces by Dou, Schalken and Frans van Mieris.[106] In 1713 the Duke of Chandos is reputed to have paid 3700 guilders for a painting by Van der Werff of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar (pl.31), perhaps the very one denounced by Shaftesbury. What Chandos valued in Van der Werff is shown by his boast that this was 'the finest finished picture that ever came over'.[107] His sale in 1747 included another work by Van der Werff, one by Mieris, and five genre pieces by Dou.[108] The very high prices paid by Chandos and Page suggests that the best works of the fijnschilders were still only available to the

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104 The Art of Painting, p.131, 68, 132, 164, 134.

105 'Vertue Note Books' III, Walp. XXII, pp.103-4. According to Vertue they cost three or four thousand pounds.

106 Martyn, English Connoisseur, II, pp.94-5.

107 The Bakers, Chandos, p.74. B. Gaehtgens (Adriaen van der Werff 1658-1722, Munich, 1987) lists four pictures by him of these characters. That bought by Chandos (no.45) was in Holland at the time of Shaftesbury's visits, being in a sale at Rotterdam (Shaftesbury's Dutch domicile) in 1713. It was later at Houghton, where Horace Walpole described the subject as Bathsheba and Abishag (AEdes Walpolianae, p.70).

108 V.& A. Sales I, pp.403-7.

very rich. High genre paintings do, however, become more common in sales, the names of Dou, Schalken and the Mieris family occuring frequently (see Appendix I). Their pictures often fetched high prices.[109] By the 1740s a high-finished Dutch picture, usually a history painting but sometimes genre, was often reserved for the prestigious last place in the sale.[110]

A notorious case of the appreciation of minuteness for its own sake occurred in 1721, when Balthasar Denner, a Hamburg painter trained in the style of the fijnschilders, exhibited a picture of an old woman's head:

> which he has by infinite Labor & Art brought to the perfection of painting drawing & colouring. which expressing the various Tinctures of flesh the small hairs the wrinckles. the grain. the pores & the Glassy humor of the Eyes (in every part) to the Admiration of All beholders. allow'd by Artists & all the Curious to be surpassing all things in that kind yet done.[111]

Denner's painting (pl.32) was a cause celebre,[112] and like Dou he was able to ask high prices.[113] His fame in England was brief but he did inspire followers, including the Danzig-born Enoch Zeeman.[114] In 1723 Sebastiano Ricci advised Lord Burlington to buy a detailed portrait by Zeeman.[115] This suggests that to contrast the Italianate taste of the Palladians with a vulgar taste for the qualities associated with Dutch art is too facile: Burlington also owned genre pieces by Teniers and Schalken.[116] Another

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109 A genre picture by 'Slingelandt & Mieris' fetched £108 in a sale by Bragge in 1751 (V.& A. Sales I, p.315). In the mid-century genre pieces rarely made over fifty pounds; those that did were usually by Teniers or the fijnschilders. History pieces by fijnschilders cost still more: one by Van der Werff in Bragge's sale in 1742 sold for £156 (ibid. I, p.162).

110 See for example the sales by Blackwood (1749), 2nd day (Van der Werff), ibid., II, p.130; Prestage (1756), 2nd day (Van der Werff), I, p.445; Rongent (1758): 1st day (Dou), 2nd day (Mieris) (II, pp.150-3).

111 'Vertue Note Books' I, Walp. XVIII, 1929-30, p.76. For Denner's relation to the fijnschilders see Gerson, Ausbreitung, p.447.

112 See Vincent Bourne's poem 'Denneri Anus.', Poematia, London, 1734.

113 'Vertue Note Books' III, Walp. XXII, pp.30-3. Vertue says that the old woman's head was sold to the Emperor for 1200 ducats, a price, he thinks, higher 'than any Painter since the revival of that Art ever had'.

114 Walpole, Anecdotes, IV, p.72.

115 'Vertue Note Books' III, Walp. XXII, pp.15-16.

116 Martyn, English Connoisseur, I, pp.30-40.

sign of English interest in the qualities of high genre was the rise of the conversation piece, a genre which owed its being to the adaptation of the conventions of high genre to portraiture by Netherlandish artists.

Not all writers, however, welcomed the taste for minute finishing. Cosmetti warned that only the ignorant look at pictures from very close.[117] Vertue's account of Herman van der Mijn, a Dutch immigrant still-life and portrait painter (pl.33), is remarkably censorious by his standards:

> a very Laborious neat painter. even to the smallest trifles in pictures...laces. threads of the stockings & other small minute things that over powerd in his portraits. ye flesh-colours. or principal parts. & very much took from the likenes. & fine taste, & noble choice, as practic'd by Men of real Merit.[118]

Walpole considered the Dutch 'drudging mimicks', accusing them of 'servile imitation' and excessive finishing and comparing them to Protogenes. He expresses amazement that 'their earthen pots and brass kettles' equal the prices given for paintings by Albano and Carlo Maratti.[119]

Walpole was, however, in the minority in disliking Dutch detail, later recalling that people had accused him of 'undervaluing' Dutch artists in the AEdes passage.[120] The most eloquent expression of the taste for Dutch minuteness was the set of painters' lives translated by James Burgess from Dézallier D'Argenville's Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres in 1754. Dézallier, reflecting the French taste for high-finished cabinet pictures, had chosen many Dutch still-life and high genre painters.[121] Burgess follows this bias in the lives he translates, giving Van der Werff, Van der

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117 The Polite Arts, p.16.

118 'Vertue Note Books' III, Walp. XXII, 1933-4, p.34.

119 AEdes Walpolianae, pp.xi, xii, xxxi, 66.

120 Draft letter to James Barry, c.1775, in Horace Walpole's Correspondence (ed. W. S. Lewis), New Haven & London, 1933-83, XXXIV, p.243.

121 Dézallier championed the collection of Dutch art throughout his career, see A. Fontaine, Les Doctrines d'art en France, Paris, 1909, p.191.

Neer, Terborch and Slingelandt their first English biographies (Appendix IV). While he makes some of the old criticisms of minuteness,[122] praise for Dutch detail is more common. Van Huysum, for example, is commended for his scientific attention to detail, even using a microscope to study insects. Since Dézallier does not mention a microscope Burgess must have added an example of minute scrutiny familiar to English readers.[123] While Dézallier makes the usual contrast between Italian and 'Flemish' art, the latter copying unselectively and drawing poorly, Burgess argues that all the schools 'have their several merits'. He comes close to historical relativism in explaining their differences through the social role of the paintings, arguing that while the broad style of Italian art is suitable for large buildings where the work is seen from afar, the Dutch painter:

> who only supplied the ornament to a rich tradesman or merchant's room, was oblig'd to produce with the neatness of his pencil; as his pictures, which were generally small hang close to the sight; which such pictures must offend, if painted as the Italian, by the fierceness of their colouring, and the roughness of their surface, which contracted nature never admits; as any man may be convinced, that will but use a proper glass.[124]

Violating the rules for viewing distance laid down in French theory, Burgess implies that Dutch art should be examined with a magnifying glass.*

In England the social conditions for the cultivation of history painting were little better than in Holland. It was to overcome this problem, and to counter the taste for Dutch imitation and finishing, that Reynolds launched a systematic attack on Dutch art in 1759. This attack returned the criticism of minuteness, with all the attendant implications which it carried in England, to the centre of the art theoretical discourse.

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[122] E.g. a Van der Neer in which the ivy is 'more admired' than the main figures ('J. B.', The Lives of the most Eminent Modern Painters, Who Have Lived since, or Were Omitted by Mons. De Piles, London, 1754, p.118).

[123] Ibid., p.134. Cf. Dézallier, Abrégé, Paris, 1745-52, III, p.100.

[124] Burgess, Lives, Preface (n.p.), cf. Dézallier, Abrégé, I, p.xxv.

* It is possible that what he had in mind was rather the surveying of nature in a Claude glass.

Chapter IV

Colour and Chiaroscuro: Naturalism and the Discourse of Luxury

Before turning to Reynolds I wish to consider attitudes to the colour and chiaroscuro of Dutch art. This chapter differs from the previous two in that these qualities were found in both high and low genre, and in discussing ideas which were derived from continental art theory with little alteration. While it will therefore be less complex than those on the comic and the minute, the attitudes discussed were no less important for the reception of Dutch genre.

Since at least the time of Vasari a division had been made between Roman and Tuscan art, whose chief quality was design, and that of Venice, whose chief quality was colour. Beginning in the late seventeenth century the Flemish and Dutch were bracketed with the Venetians, for example by Richardson.[1] Colour and chiaroscuro were seen as the most admirable aspects of Dutch art. Graham, for example, praised Bamboccio for the 'admirable Gusto' of his colouring.[2] Colour and chiaroscuro were, however, as much terms of exclusion as 'minute' and 'droll'. To understand why, it is necessary to look at the wider context of remarks about colour in art theory, at the distinct but related problems of luxury and naturalism.

Junius cited Pliny's account of how ancient art declined from a simple style with few hues to one in which gaudy colours hid faults in more

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1 Theory, p.151.
2 'Short Account', p.326. Cf. Félibien, Entretiens II, p.244.

important areas and exerted an immediate sensual appeal on the 'grosse and unexercised capacities' of the vulgar. This fall also encouraged meretricious workmanship of the sort which led to minuteness. Indeed, Junius cites Horace's sculptor in his section on colour.[3] Both descents drew their language from the classical topos of a fall into an age of luxury, a decline from simple living and chaste manly vigour into ornament, licentiousness, effeminacy, corruption and populism.[4] Later writers applied the discourse of luxury to modern art. Turnbull argued that the moderns, unlike the ancients, were incapable of good design, seeking rather to 'flatter the Sense by a various Mixture of gorgeous Colours'.[5] Dionysius of Halincarnassus' characterisation of the florid, delusive, populist Asiatic style of rhetoric as a whore who drives out a chaste wife was also influential.[6] Dryden, following Du Fresnoy, calls colour the 'Bawd' of design: 'she dresses her up, she paints her, she makes her appear more lovely than naturally she is, she procures' for her.[7] James Wills describes painting as 'a recluse lady...coy and reserved: if she condescends to coquet indeed with a few gaudy colours for the sake of the ignorant, the knowing despise her for it'.[8]

The modern parallel to the fall into luxury was seen as the decline from Roman art to Venetian and Netherlandish art with their stress on

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[3] Painting of the Ancients, pp.118-20, 287, 289. Spence also stressed the appeal of the colour to the vulgar, see Crito, pp.7, 14.

[4] C.f. Painting of the Ancients, pp.118-20, 286-8. For the importance of the concepts of luxury and simplicity in the eighteenth century see J. Sekora, Luxury, London, 1977; R. D. Havens, 'Simplicity, A Changing Concept', Journal of the History of Ideas XIV, 1953, pp.3-32.

[5] A Curious Collection of Ancient Paintings, London, 1741, p.7.

[6] For Dionysius see Gombrich, Norm and Form, p.104; A. Ellenius, De Arte Pingendi, Uppsala, 1960, pp.79-82. Ellenius notes that criticisms of colour were based on those made of elocutio in rhetoric.

[7] 'Parallel', p.xlviii.

[8] De Arte Graphica; or, the Art of Painting. Translated from the Original Latin of C. A. Du Fresnoy, London, 1754, p.5.

colour. The luxuriant qualities of gaudiness and harlotry were, however, usually attributed to Flemish and Venetian art rather than to that of Holland.[9] Although pictures whose main quality was colour were always liable to be associated with luxury, the colour of Dutch art was more usually linked to its naturalism. Martin Lister, for example, thought that the colour of the Dutch pictures he had seen in Paris was unsurpassed for copying 'flesh and garments'.[10] The power of colour to copy appearances had been praised since Plutarch who, as cited by Junius, wrote that colour moves us more than 'a simple delineation' because of its 'neere resemblance'.[11] While natural colour was preferred to the mendacity of luxuriant colour, it also suffered some of the same criticisms. It was, for example, held to have a vulgar appeal.[12] More damaging was its association with the literal copying of particular nature. While design was essential and ideal, colour was thought to show only superficial appearances. For Webb design 'gives a general idea', colour 'a particular existence'.[13] Since accurate colouring was thought to require only the hand and eye and not the mind it was seen as no more than a mechanical skill. Richardson thought a picture weak in design but good in colour merely 'a Beautiful and Delightful Object, and a fine piece of Workmanship, to say no more of it'.[14] The point was that excellence in colour entailed the exact copying of nature, while excellence in design entailed its improvement. The qualities therefore seemed contradictory, and most artists who excelled in one were seen as defective in the other.[15]

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9 E.g. Martyn, English Connoisseur, p.iii.

10 Journey to Paris (1699), cit Slive, Rembrandt, p.144.

11 Painting of the Ancients, p.285. Cf. Richardson, Theory, p.151; Daniel Webb, An Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting, London, 1761, p.90.

12 E.g. Junius, Painting of the Ancients, p.120.

13 Inquiry, p.70. Cf. Félibien, Entretiens I, pp.557-8.

14 'Connoisseur', in Two Discourses, p.14.

15 See e.g. Webb on Correggio and Titian (good at colour), and Raphael (good at design) (Inquiry, pp.82-4, 118-22).

Praise for Dutch colour was often twinned with criticisms of literal copying and poor design, as in Graham's remarks on Dou.[16] Admiration for Dutch colour thus paradoxically encouraged a low view of Dutch art.

Dutch painters, especially Rembrandt, were also praised for their chiaroscuro.[17] Félibien, for example, praised Dou's treatment of light and shade.[18] Chiaroscuro had been yoked with colour since Alberti,[19] both being seen as the function of light rather than form, secondary rather than primary. Chiaroscuro was, however, largely exempted from the attacks made on colour for its luxuriance. It was not ornamental, whorish or, for most writers, vulgar, and some argued that it should be preferred to colour. Leonardo thought that painters who sacrificed chiaroscuro for colour did so only to attract the vulgar.[20] Richardson admired its ability to unify disparate details.[21] Chiaroscuro was, however, held to hide faults in taste or design. Webb observed that the excellent chiaroscuro of Flemish artists cannot hide that 'their aims are vulgar'.[22] Lairesse argued that Rembrandt's 'broken' shadows made his forms 'less beautiful'.[23] Vulgarity was a less usual accusation, but Walpole complained that Schalken's facile 'tricks' with light were designed to appeal to the mob.[24]

Several French thinkers, however, contested the idea that colour was a subsidiary quality. De Piles, while admitting that nature's design often

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16 'Short Acccount', p.337. Cf. Félibien, Entretiens, II, p.244; Lairesse, Art of Painting, pp.253-4; Elsum, Description, p.92.
17 See e.g. Richardson, Account of some of the Statues, p.236.
18 Entretiens, II, p.244.
19 De Pictura, 46.
20 Treatise, p.141.
21 Theory, p.133; cf. Testelin, Sentiments, Table on 'Clair-obscure'.
22 Inquiry, pp.118-125.
23 Art of Painting, pp.252-3.
24 Anecdotes, III, p.130.

needs perfecting, argues that her colour and chiaroscuro cannot be improved and that the painter who copies them exactly will be a 'more perfect Imitator of Nature' than those 'who understand Measure and Proportion as well as he'. He even claimed colour as the highest quality, stating that Rembrandt was master of the brush and of colour, which proves that 'he possest the best parts of his Art in a sovereign degree'. For de Piles chiaroscuro redeemed the literal copying of Dutch artists: 'without it all the care they have taken to imitate the particular Objects of Nature, with the utmost faithfulness, had not been worth our consideration'.[25] Dézallier argued that its judicious use allows the artist to paint in minute detail. Thus, although you may count the bricks in Van der Heyden's houses, nothing seems laboured or servile because 'the chiaro oscuro and the harmony of the picture are not in the least interrupted, but...form most admirable masses of light and shadow'.[26] Both these arguments would recur in England at the end of the century.

Despite the translations of Dézallier's lives and de Piles' most elaborate statement on colour and chiaroscuro,[27] English writers were slow to voice their approval of these qualities.[28] Even Richardson, who was deeply influenced by de Piles, placed far less stress on colour than the Frenchman. When Reynolds began his literary career in 1759 the old objections to colour as an index of luxury or vulgar naturalism still held sway in England.

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[25] Art of Painting, pp.5, 320, 7. Cf. Lambert Ten Kate, a Dutch writer who published in French, Ideal Beauty in Painting (1732), London, 1769, p.15.

[26] Lives of the most Eminent Modern Painters, p.111.

[27] The Cours, trans. as The Principles of Painting, London, 1743.

[28] An exception was Thomas Bardwell, whose Painting and Perspective Made Easy, London, 1756 was heavily indebted to de Piles in its remarks on colour.

Chapter V

Reynolds and the Foundation of an Academic Orthodoxy

Writing in 1759, Joshua Reynolds advocated a 'grand style' which would attend to 'the great and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal Nature'. By way of illustration he contrasted Italian art, exemplifying the grand style, and Dutch art, exemplifying its opposite:

> the Dutch...[attend only] to literal truth and a minute exactness in detail, as I may say, of Nature modified by the accident. The attention to these petty peculiarities is the very cause of this naturalness so much admired in the Dutch pictures, which, if we suppose it to be a beauty, is certainly of a lower order, that ought to give place to a beauty of a superior kind, since one cannot be obtained but by departing from the other.[1]

Although Reynolds was probably indebted to Dryden and Antoine Coypel for his distinction between Italian and Dutch art,[2] no writer since de Hollanda had placed such theoretical weight on the paradigm. Its purpose, and that of the Idler letters in general, was to inspire a reformation in English art and thus win public recognition that painting was a liberal art rather than a mechanical craft. Reynolds contends that if painting, like

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[1] Letter to the Idler 79, 20 Oct.1759, in Works I, p.354. He first mentions the idea in a notebook kept on his Italian trip, see C. R. Leslie & T. Taylor, Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds, London, 1865, I, p.41.

[2] A commonplace book kept by him between 1730 and 1741 quotes the lines from Dryden's precis of Bellori on Bamboccio and the Dutch painters (Y.C.B.A. MS Reynolds 33, fol.60r). For Coypel's distinction between Italian and Dutch art see above, p.46. Coypel also argued that literal imitation pleases all while only a few enjoy the highest art (Discours, p.21. There is, to my knowledge, no firm evidence of Reynolds having read Coypel, but I find the proximity of their ideas significant. Neither Wark nor F. W. Hilles (The Literary Career of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Cambridge, 1936) nor Reynolds' French editor, L. Dimier (Discours sur la peinture, Paris, 1909), refer to Coypel's theory, but in 1818 the Annals of the Fine Arts claimed that Reynolds had been 'greatly indebted' to him (III, p.23). Reynolds' ideas about northern European art are closer to those of Coypel than to any of his other sources, as will be noted in this chapter.

Dutch art, aims only at the minutely literal reproduction of particular nature, then it may 'be no longer considered a liberal art, and Sister to Poetry'.[3] Reynolds was not alone in calling for reform, indeed, his letters may have been a response to the announcement by the Society of Arts in April 1759 of a reward for a history picture that 'may ...give beginning to an English school'.[4] His use of Dutch art as an example of what English painters should reject suggests that he may have seen the fashion for Dutch art in the 1750s as a threat to the nascent English school. The same fear was implied by the engraver Robert Strange, who in 1769 opened a gallery of Italian art. Strange argued in his Catalogue that 'it is only by studying and meditating upon the works of the Italian Masters, that we can reasonably expect to form a true taste, and to defend ourselves against the destructive and capricious sorcery of fashion'.[5]

In the Idler letters Reynolds also sought to demark an élite taste. He asserts that while artists and theorists all admit one maxim, 'Imitate Nature', 'every one takes it in the most obvious sense, - that objects are represented naturally, when they have such relief that they seem real'. The reader is encouraged to set himself above 'every one' and follow the higher sense of nature which Reynolds offers.[6] Barrell has argued that this élitism had a political dimension, that Reynolds was proposing the ability to abstract the general as the qualification for enfranchisement in the commonwealth,[7] but Reynolds was also advocating a more traditional

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[3] Idler 79, in Works I, pp.353-4.

[4] See M. Brownell, Samuel Johnson's Attitude to the Arts, Oxford, 1989, p.47.

[5] A Descriptive Catalogue of a Collection of Pictures, London, 1769, pp.ii-iii. The exhibition contained only a few Dutch paintings, of which just two, by Teniers the Elder and Van den Eeckhout, were genre.

[6] Idler 79, Works, I, pp.354-5.

[7] Political Theory, pp.69-90.

measure of élitism, the preference for one school over another. Like the Duke of Shrewsbury fifty years earlier, he identifies a preference for Italian art and its qualities as indicative of good taste, while a liking for Dutch art and literal naturalism is marked as vulgar. It is more than a coincidence that in the years after the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle the English social élite flocked to Italy in unprecedented numbers.[8]

In the Discourses, however, Reynolds' concerns were different. Instead of arguing one side of a polemic he set out to reduce the disparate strands of art theory into a coherent doctrinal orthodoxy for the new English school, a work of synthesis similar to that which his friend Samuel Johnson had performed for the English language. This model, based on Barrell's reading of Johnson's Dictionary,[9] is, I believe, more accurate than Barrell's own account of Reynolds. While agreeing with him that it is significant that Reynolds takes so little interest in the didactic moral role of the art, I find little evidence for his argument that the guidelines for taste laid down by Reynolds on the basis of shared aesthetic capacity were the result of an attempt to transform the discourse of civic humanism.[10] Indeed, I am not convinced that civic humanism was very important for Reynolds at all. The writers who best exemplify this discourse, Shaftesbury and Turnbull, had little influence on him. Reynolds owed more to other discourses, especially that tradition of continental art theory whose most important English spokesman was Richardson. French art theory, as Barrell states,[11] was little concerned with the public dimension of moral subjects until the mid-century writings of La Font de Saint-

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[8] See Waterhouse, Three Decades of British Art 1740-1770, Philadelphia, 1965, pp.24-48.

[9] English Literature in History 1730-50, London, 1983, p.111f..

[10] Political Theory, pp.69-162.

[11] Ibid., pp.39-43.

Yenne,[12] and Richardson, as Barrell goes some way towards admitting, was far more indebted to continental theory than to civic humanism.[13]

Ironically, at the very time that La Font was disrupting French art theory Reynolds was turning his back on subject matter and focussing attention on the formal qualities of the art. His only mention of the vulgar subjects of Dutch genre occurs in Discourse Three:

> The painters...who express with precision the various shades of passion, as they are exhibited by vulgar minds...deserve great praise; but as their genius has been employed on low and confined subjects the praise which we give must be as limited as its object. The merry-making, or quarrelling, of the Boors of Teniers; the same sort of productions of Brouwer, or Ostade, are excellent in their kind; and the excellence and its praise will be in proportion, as, in those limited subjects, and peculiar forms, they introduce more or less of the expression of those passions, as they appear in general and more enlarged nature.[14]

The notion that the lowest genres are to be valued for their expression of general nature is Richardsonian,[15] but unlike Richardson Reynolds hardly ever returns to the question of subject matter. He also furthers the disassociation of low genre from comedy, never once refering to low genre as comic. When he compares 'the inferior style of Painting' to 'the lower kind of Comedy, or Farce' it is not to say that the former is comical but to argue that a natural style is appropriate to it, as it is to comedy. It is only when that style is used to inappropriate ends, in history painting, that Reynolds finds it funny, calling Steen's history pictures with their 'vulgar' faces 'ridiculous'.[16] Like Du Bos, he finds Dutch art humorous only when it is pretentious.

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12 See Crow, Painters and Public Life, pp.6-11.
13 Barrell, op.cit., pp.20-3.
14 Discourse III (1770), Discourses, p.51.
15 In his c.1730-41 Commonplace Book he quoted Richardson: 'even in Drolls, there is a Grace and Greatness proper to them' (fol.61v).
16 Discourse XIII (1786), Discourses, p.236.

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16 Discourse XIII (1786), Discourses, p.236.

Reynolds' remarks on Dutch art focus instead on its formal qualities and its mode of imitation. He thus prepares the way for a more sympathetic response to Dutch low genre, diverting attention away from the drolls of painters like Heemskerk, who, remarkably in the light of his earlier fame, is not mentioned once in the Discourses,[17] and towards artists like Ostade and Teniers in whose works qualities of production were easier to see. These artists are often discussed as if they were high genre painters. Indeed, the division between low and high genre is all but forgotten: Reynolds effectively combines the two categories and discusses both in terms of imitation and formal values.

Reynolds did, however, at least in the early Discourses, continue to take a dim view of Dutch minuteness. His thoughts on the minute are, in the main, conventional. He associates it with an immature phase of the art,[18] and with the sensual 'ornamental' style rather than the more intellectual grand style.[19] To show how the art may go beyond literal transcription and use the mind, rather than merely the hand and eye, Reynolds presents his concept of the 'central form', which lies in the abstraction of the average of all the specimens of an object, species or physical type rather than copying of a single specimen. It is in this central form that truth and beauty lie, for it omits the 'minuteness or imperfection' found in individual things.[20] It also allows a painter to transcend the particular and give his works universal validity. It is this universality which the Dutch, in their minuteness, fail to achieve:

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17 Reynolds was perfectly well aware of Heemskerk, having owned a picture by him. See F. J. P. Broun, 'Sir Joshua Reynolds' Collection of Paintings', Princeton Ph.D. thesis, 1987, II, p.18.

18 Discourse I, Discourses, pp.15-16.

19 Discourse IV (1771), ibid., pp.58-67.

20 Discourse III, ibid., p.44. Cf. Idler 82, 10 Nov. 1759, p.361.

> With them, a history-piece is properly a portrait of themselves; whether they describe the inside or outside of their houses, we have their own people engaged in their own peculiar occupations; working, or drinking, playing, or fighting. The circumstances that enter into a picture of this kind, are so far from giving a general view of human life, that they exhibit all the minute particularities of a nation differing in several respects from the rest of mankind.[21]

While Reynolds' criticisms of minuteness are familiar he paid more attention to the issue than any theorist since Shaftesbury. He may also, like Shaftesbury, have drawn upon the now aging quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. Reviving the spectre of detailed scientific study, he advises the student to:

> permit the lower painter, like the florist or the collector of shells, to exhibit the minute discriminations, which distinguish one object of the same species from another; while he, like the philosopher, will consider nature in the abstract, and represent in every one of his figures the character of its species.[22]

Elsewhere he argues that the landscape painter should only paint the 'general effect', because he speaks 'to the imagination, not the curiosity, and works not for the Virtuoso or the Naturalist, but for the common observer of life and nature.[23] One of Reynolds' few remarks on the morality of painting evokes Berkeley's attack on the 'empty amusement of seeing' offered by minute vision, arguing that the painter, instead of seeking 'to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations...must endeavour to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas'.[24] In the unpublished 'Ironical Discourse', Reynolds, responding to the French Revolution, attacks men of limited knowledge who set themselves up as politicians in terms very close to Berkeley's attack on free-thinkers:

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[21] Discourse IV, Discourses, p.69. Cf. Coypel's very similar remarks on Dürer, Rubens and Van Dyck, Discours, p.130.

[22] Discourse III, Discourses, p.50

[23] Discourse XI (1782), ibid., p.199.

[24] Discourse III, ibid., p.42, cf. p.50.

> A hundred thousand near-sighted men, that see only what is just before them, make no equivalent to one man whose view extends to the whole horizon round him, though we may safely acknowledge at the same time that like the real near-sighted men, they see and comprehend as distinctly what is within the focus of their sight as accurately (I will allow sometimes more accurately) than the others.[25]

I do not wish to argue that Reynolds necessarily derived his ideas on the minute from Shaftesbury,[26] merely that, in sharing similar concerns with the status of painting and the proper method of imitation, and a common inclination to the general and the ideal, both found it useful to evoke the arguments of the Ancients against the Moderns. A more likely conduit for these arguments was Reynolds' friend, Johnson. There are many parallels in Johnson's writings for Reynolds' attacks on minuteness and his use of science as an analogy for this error, the most famous being Imlac's speech with its warning against a botanical attention to detail.[27] Johnson shared Shaftesbury's opinion on the relative importance of the moral study of man and natural philosophy,[28] and, like Berkeley, argued that a minutely scientific inspection drew attention from the beauty of the subject.[29] While Reynolds never mentions the microscope, introducing the

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[25] Published in Portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds (ed. F. W. Hilles), London, 1952, p.129. Barrell (Political Theory, p.80) argues that the passage was influenced by Burke. In the passage Barrell quotes (p.348 n.18), however, Burke does not use the figure of myopia, which is surely drawn from Berkeley or perhaps Locke (see above, pp.84-5).

[26] Reynolds read the Characteristicks in 1752, although none of his extant notes relate to the passages on the minute (see Hilles, Literary Career, pp.10, 203-6).

[27] The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia, London, 1759, p.68. Cf. Rambler 83, 1 Jan.1751, in which Johnson also attacks collectors of shells and flowers (The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson IV (eds. W. J. Bate & A. B. Strauss), New Haven and London, 1969, p.71).

[28] See e.g. his disapproval of Milton's plans to teach physical sciences in his academy, The Lives of the English Poets (1779), Oxford, 1905, I, p.99.

[29] Criticising the metaphysical poets, he denied that 'he who dissects a sunbeam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon' (ibid., I, p.21).

camera obscura as his optical figure for a minute attention to detail,[30] Johnson showed its continuing vitality as a metaphor, arguing that a microscopic examination reveals only ugliness and trivia, losing sight of the beauty and importance of the whole. 'When we examine a mite with a glass', he asserts, 'we see nothing but a mite'.[31] From Johnson Reynolds could have acquired a battery of arguments for his attack on minuteness, adjusting them in line with his own relative indifference to the question of morality. Johnson is an especially likely source given that while the the problem of the minute had virtually disappeared from art theory since Shaftesbury it had remained important for literary figures like Pope, Swift and Thomson.[32] Whatever the source of Reynolds' ideas on the minute, it was he, more directly than any earlier writer, who identified Dutch art as the equivalent of the scientist's approach, seeking distinction only from 'some inferior dexterity, some extraordinary mechanical power'.[33]

Despite Reynolds' strictures on the minuteness and particularity of Dutch art, there are signs in the early Discourses that he was relaxing the rigour of the paradigmatic distinction between Dutch and Italian art made in the second Idler letter. In the Fourth Discourse he admits that Dutch painters 'are excellent in their own way'.[34] In the Sixth he argues that:

> very finished artists in the inferior branches of the art, will contribute to furnish the mind and give hints, of which a skilful painter, who is sensible of what he wants, and is in no danger of

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30 Discourse XIII, Discourses, p.237.

31 Rambler 112, 13 April 1751, in Works IV. p.236. For a discussion of Johnson's views on the minute see I. Grundy, Samuel Johnson and the Scale of Greatness, Leicester, 1986, p.31, passim.

32 Pope, Essay on Man (1733-4) I, 193-6; Swift, see above, p.83; Thomson, Summer (1727), 11.287-329. Thomson argues that a perfect gaze would take in both the extensive prospect and minute details, prefiguring the belief of some early nineteenth-century art theorists that detail and grandeur might be reconciled. For Thomson see Barrell, Survey, pp.56-65.

33 Discourse IV, Discourses, p.69.

34 Ibid.

> being infected by the contact of vicious models, will know how to avail himself. He will pick up from dunghills what by a nice chymistry, passing through his own mind, shall be converted into pure gold.

The dunghills in question include Bamboccio and Miel, who employed a 'correct, firm, and determined pencil', Teniers, with his 'elegance and precision', and Steen, who shows 'great power in expressing the character and passions' of the vulgar. Had Steen been born in Italy and been taught by Michelangelo and Raphael rather than Brouwer and Van Goyen:

> the same sagacity and penetration which distinguished so accurately the different characters and expression in his vulgar figures, would, when exerted in the selection and imitation of what was great and elevated in nature, have been equally successful; and he now would have ranged with the great pillars and supporters of our Art.[35]

While this is high praise it does not subvert the Dutch-Italian paradigm but reinforces it: for all his ability Steen cannot escape the limitations of being Dutch. More radical is the breadth of Reynolds' eclecticism, recommending Dutch art as well as that of Italy and France to the painter. Earlier arguments for eclecticism had left Dutch art beyond the pale.

After Discourse Seven Reynolds becomes more sympathetic to Dutch art. The general shift in the mood of the Discourses at this time [36] is perhaps to be explained by the publication of the first seven Discourses in one volume. Reynolds may have seen this as a definitive statement, rounded off by an essay on taste (Discourse Seven) of the type obligatory in contemporary aesthetic treatises. Having published it, he may have felt free to be less dogmatic, more ready to admit the merits of conflicting styles. A still bigger change in his ideas about Dutch art is visible after his trip to the Netherlands in 1781. If, in the light of the remarks

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[35] Discourse VI (1774), ibid., pp.107-9.
[36] The shift is also noted by Barrell, Political Theory, p.72.

quoted above the visit cannot be said to have converted Reynolds to Dutch art, then he did return with a keener appreciation of its qualities. He stops using Dutch art as a negative exemplar in the Discourses (Eleven to Fifteen) written after 1781, and concludes his account of the trip by attacking the affectation of those who see no merit in Dutch art:

> I will venture to repeat in favour of Rubens, what I have said before in regard to the Dutch school, - that those who cannot see the extraordinary merit of this great painter, either have a narrow conception of the variety of art, or are led away by the affectation of approving nothing but what comes from the Italian school.[37]

In his journal of the trip Reynolds attributes the Dutch taste for 'small curious high-finished cabinet pictures' to social circumstances rather than bad taste, explaining, in the manner of Burgess, that the pictures were painted for private houses, not churches. While he dislikes this patronage structure and compares it to the English situation he also sees it as excusing the approach of Dutch artists, who he consequently judges on their own terms. If the excellence of Dutch art lies in the 'truth of representation alone', a limitation censured in the second Idler letter, Reynolds here speaks only of the pleasures of viewing this truth.[38] His frustration at the inscrutability of Dutch art, his account of which is little more than a list of titles, seems to fulfil the concern voiced in the Idler that in exactly copying painting forfeits the title of sister to poetry. Here, however, Reynolds merely apologises for his inability to describe the qualities he sees. He looked at Dutch art carefully enough to identify certain Dutch painters as 'the most considerable', among them

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37 'A Journey to Flanders and Holland', in Works, II, p.124.

38 'Journey', in Works II, pp.64, 85. Cf. Coypel: [dans] 'les ouvrages des Hollandois, on trouvera dans les sujets les plus communs & même les plus bas, une verité simple & naïve tres-estimables, comme dans Rimbrand, Girardou & plusieurs autres' (Discours, p.162).

several genre painters (see Appendix IV). By suggesting that some Dutch artists are better than others Reynolds implies that the Dutch school cannot be dismissed en bloc.[39]

Reynolds does not merely admire Dutch painting for its limited quality of truthful imitation. As in Discourse Six he commends it to students, in particular the unsurpassed handling of Teniers and the composition, expression and chiaroscuro of Steen, which 'might become even the design of Raffaelle'. He stresses, however, that these are subsidiary qualities, not equal to those seen in Italian art: 'painters should go to the Dutch school to learn the art of painting, as they would go to a grammar-school to learn languages. They must go to Italy to learn the higher branches of knowledge'.[40]

In his later works Reynolds also gave fulsome praise to Dutch colour and chiaroscuro, a subject about which he had been silent in his early writings. His initial statements on colour, in Discourse Four, follow the discourse of luxury, contrasting the simple and chaste colours of the grand style seen in Roman and Tuscan art with the sensual, 'seducing' colours of the ornamental Venetian school. Colour is seen as no more than a 'mechanical' part of the art, a means to an end. Nevertheless, it should not be neglected, especially in the lower genres.[41] While a change is again evident in Discourse Eight, in which the ornamental style is no longer presented as necessarily inferior to the Grand,[42] it was on his trip

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39 'Journey', Works II, pp.85-6.

40 Ibid., pp.85-8. Cf. Coypel, who argued that Kalf could 'parler le langage de la peinture aussi bien que le Giorgione et le Titien', but chose to exercise this skill on lesser subjects (Discours, p.22).

41 Discourse IV, Discourses, pp.61-71.

42 Ibid., pp.153-4.

to the Netherlands that Reynolds came to a more enthusiastic appreciation of Netherlandish colour. While this revision was mainly inspired by Rubens, Reynolds also praises the chiaroscuro and colour of Dutch art, advising the student that 'here he may learn the art of colouring and composition, a skilful management of light and shade, and indeed all the mechanical parts of the art, as well as in any other school whatever.' Many Dutch pictures are praised for their colour and chiaroscuro, and it emerges that Reynolds had the ability to abstract formal qualities from subject matter, a talent already manifested in his sketching of the chiaroscuro of a picture abstracted from its subject during his visit to Venice. Faced with a picture by Rembrandt of a slaughtered ox, a subject at times used to exemplify the disgusting choice of nature made by Dutch painters,[43] Reynolds remarks laconically: 'A Butcher's shop, an ox hanging up, opened - a woman looking over a hatch, so richly coloured, that it makes all the rest of the picture seem dry'.[44] This incipient formalism looks forward to the more unabashed formalism of Payne Knight, with its claim that visual qualities may be abstracted from a picture's subject.

Reynolds continued to champion Dutch colour and chiaroscuro in his notes to Mason's translation of Du Fresnoy, published the year after his trip to the Netherlands. He argues that the chiaroscuro of Steen, Teniers and Dusart shows such 'consummate skill' that it 'entirely conceals the appearance of art'.[45] Taking advantage of Du Fresnoy's concern with colour and chiaroscuro Reynolds place more value on these qualities than he had in the earlier Discourses. He even argues that Michelangelo and Raphael might

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[43] See below, pp.130, 135.

[44] 'Journey', in Works II, p.82, cf. p.68-9.

[45] William Mason, The Art of Painting of Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy... with Annotations by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1782), in Works II, p.245.

have learnt from Dutch colour:

> though it would be far from an addition to the merit of those two great Painters to have made their works deceptions, yet there can be no reason why they might not, in some degree, and with a judicious caution and selection, have availed themselves of many excellencies which are found in the Venetian, Flemish, and even Dutch schools... the happy disposition, for instance, of light and shade; the preservation of breadth in the masses of colours...with many other excellencies, not inseparably connected with that individuality which produces deception, would surely not counteract the effect of the grand style...Though the merits of those two great Painters are of such transcendency as to make us overlook their deficiency, yet a subdued attention to their inferior excellencies must be added to complete the idea of a perfect Painter.[46]

Reynolds here not only contradicts the first Idler letter and the Fourth Discourse,[47] where he had stressed the incompatibility of different styles, but also undermines the paradigmatic opposition between Dutch and Italian art presented in the second Idler letter. While the supremacy of Italian art is never questioned, Reynolds now recommends a broad eclecticism more akin to his own practice, an eclecticism which includes Dutch art.

In the later Discourses Reynolds largely abandons the use of Dutch art as a paradigm for bad practice. His criticisms of minuteness in the Eighth and Eleventh Discourses make no mention of Dutch art.[48] There are signs, indeed, that Reynolds was becoming more sympathetic to Dutch minuteness. A Van der Heyden is described as 'finished as usual very minutely, [but] he has not forgot to preserve at the same time a great breadth of light'.[49] His ideas on the minute were changing. If he states in the Du Fresnoy notes that 'an individual model, copied with scrupulous exactness, makes a mean style, like the Dutch', he balances this by saying that the neglect of models results in mannerism.[50] As early as Discourse Four Reynolds had

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46 Ibid., pp.264-5.
47 Idler 76, 29 Sept. 1759, in Works I, p.352.
48 Discourse VIII, Discourse XI, Discourses, pp.147, 192-201.
49 'Journey', in Works II, p.79.
50 Du Fresnoy, in Works II, p.235.

admitted that 'some circumstances of minuteness and particularity' often give 'an air of truth' and interest the spectator, but advised caution in using them.[51] In the Du Fresnoy notes, however, he asserts that artists 'must unite to the warmth that accompanies a poetical imagination, patience and perseverence...labouring the minute parts and finishing the detail of his works, in order to produce the great effect he desires'.[52] In the same year he states that 'he that does not at all express particulars, expresses nothing'.[53] Reynolds always, however, prefers artists who generalise to those who merely copy. In Discourse Thirteen he argues that a view painted 'with all the truth of the camera obscura' will always seem 'little and mean' beside one painted by a great artist.[54] Nevertheless, Reynolds was now willing to adjust the unqualified criticism of the minute and particular seen in the Idler letters.

Especially marked in Reynolds' later writings was his readiness to praise literal imitation, as in his admiration for Gainsborough's 'minute observation of particular nature'.[55] Literal imitation is, however, only appropriate in the lower genres. After praising the 'white sattin remarkably well painted' in a genre piece by Terborch, in which 'the individuality and naturalness of the representation makes a considerable part of the merit', he adds that the white satin in Lairesse's Cleopatra is not similarly laudable because his subject is 'heroic' and should be treated in 'the true historical style'.[56] Steen's history pictures are

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51 Discourse IV, Discourses, p.58.
52 Du Fresnoy, in Works II, pp.259-60.
53 Discourse XI, Discourses, p.192.
54 Discourse XIII, ibid., p.237.
55 Discourse XIV, ibid., p.253.
56 'Journey', in Works II, pp.80-82. Reynolds' mentions of satin in his attacks on particularised drapery may have been a response to the copious satin used by portraitists of the generation with which he was initially in competition, such as Hudson. Cf. Discourse IV, Discourses,

marred by an improper 'finery of silks and velvets'.[57] Reynolds thus remained faithful to the doctrine of the hierarchy of genres.

By the time of his death Reynolds had sketched out a new role for Dutch painting in the theory of art, as the exemplar of a naturalistic style which was admirable in low subjects but ridiculous in high. As a result of his focus on the manner of imitation rather than the subject imitated Reynolds was more ready than earlier writers to praise the literal truth, colour and chiaroscuro of Dutch art, and even to contend that these qualities might be useful to painters in higher genres. While he never questions the paradigmatic inferiority of Dutch art, Reynolds thus opens the possibility of a more sympathetic response to it through a concentration on its formal qualities.

Thanks to his fame and the success with which he forged an Academic orthodoxy out of disparate sources, Reynolds forced subsequent English art theorists to reassert, adjust or disagree with the discourse he had defined. Academic writers tended to look to the more dogmatic and consistent early Discourses, while those at odds with the Academy looked to the eclecticism and openness of Reynolds' later writings, in which his attempt to establish a consistent body of doctrine was blurred.

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p.62; the Commonplace Book, c.1753-60, Y.C.B.A. MS Reynolds 34, f.60r: 'The truly noble style of Painting does not require you to...dwell on the minuter parts & Distinctions such as distinguishing silk from satin'. For the low opinion held by Reynolds' generation of the painters of white satin cf. Walpole on Hudson, Anecdotes IV, p.123.

[57] Discourse XIII, Discourses, p.236.

PART TWO

Chapter VI

New Developments in the English Art World, 1760-1834

Reynolds' early writings formed the foundation for the body of theory developed by successive Professors of Painting at the Academy. In the lectures of Henry Fuseli, John Opie, Thomas Phillips and Henry Howard,[1] consequently, Dutch art, while allowed to possess minor qualities, remains a paradigm of bad practice. The dominion over art theory to which the Academy pretended was, however, immediately threatened by the rise of competing constituencies, each of which found the theoretical vocabulary and standards offered by the Academy in some way inadequate. Collectors and dealers, artists opposing the Academy line and writers representing the wider public who were now increasingly coming into contact with art thus developed their own vocabularies competing with, adapting or evading Academic orthodoxy. As a result of this fragmentation of art theory general agreement on the paradigms on which earlier discourse had rested, including that of the inferiority of Dutch art, was weakened. This chapter surveys the challenges to Academic doctrine, while their impact on attitudes to Dutch art will be analysed in the following chapters.

Collectors, Connoisseurs and Dealers

The most important challenge to Academic doctrine was caused by the upsurge in the collecting of Dutch art in the later eighteenth century.

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[1] Fuseli was Professor from 1799 to 1804 and from 1809 to 1825, Opie from 1805 to 1807, Phillips from 1825 to 1832, Howard from 1833 to 1847.

The supply of Dutch art began to rise in the 1760s with the sale of several French collections rich in Dutch art, and with the activities of dealers like John Greenwood and John Bertels in the Low Countries.[2] While some collectors, like Reynolds, acquired a representative sample of Dutch art,[3] others such as the 3rd Earl of Bute[4] and Sir Lawrence Dundas, who owned fifteen pictures by Teniers,[5] responded to the increased availability of Dutch art by specialising in it. Most importantly, the future George IV began to collect Dutch art in the 1780s.[6] The growing interest in Dutch and Flemish art resulted in the visits of several connoisseurs and artists to the Low Countries in the 1780s, including Reynolds in 1783 and 1785, Walpole in 1785 and Sir George Beaumont in 1786.[7] The market took off after the French Revolution, which led to the sale of several French

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[2] For Greenwood see Edward Edwards, Anecdotes of Painters Who Have Resided or Been Born in England, London, 1808, p.169; D. Sutton, 'The Dundas Pictures', Apollo LXXXVI, 1967, pp.205-12. On 26 April 1780 Clayton and Parys put up paintings brought from the continent by Bertels together with the collection of the Dutchman Verhulst. The sale included twenty-two Dutch genre pictures.

[3] Reynolds bought Dutch genre paintings throughout his life (Broun, 'Reynolds' Collection' II, pp.1-82). Given his dislike of minuteness he predictably preferred low genre: sixteen of the eighteen Dutch genre pieces in his posthumous sale were low genre (Christie's, 11-14 March 1795).

[4] When G. F. Waagen saw the Bute collection in the 1830s it contained over twenty genre paintings, most of them collected by the Earl (Works of Art and Artists in England, London, 1838, II, pp.359-65).

[5] Dundas, however, was highly selective, owning few other genre paintings. See his posthumous sale, Greenwood, 29-31 May 1794.

[6] See White, Dutch Pictures, pp.liv-lv. A lone precedent for this level of interest in Dutch art was Charles Jennens, who built up a collection of over one hundred Dutch paintings in the middle of the century. Only ten of these, however, were genre paintings. See Martyn, English Connoisseur II, pp.117-42.

[7] See James Northcote, The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1809), London, 1818, II, pp.161, 213; F. Owen & D. B. Brown, Collector of Genius: a Life of Sir George Beaumont, New Haven & London, 1988, p.68. While war interrupted the fashion for visits to the Netherlands they recommenced after 1815, encouraged by the desire to see the battlefield of Waterloo. Guides like Charles Campbell's The Traveller's Complete Guide through Belgium, Holland and Germany, London, 1815, specifically recommended the art collections.

collections in England.[8] The part of the Orleans collection sold in 1793 included twenty Dutch genre paintings,[9] that of Calonne, auctioned in 1795, twenty-three.[10] Collections from the Low Countries, threatened by the plundering French, also arrived. The sale of the Greffiers Fagel included twenty Dutch genre paintings, that of Liss of Antwerp twenty-three.[11] Collectors of British origin living in Holland such as the Hope family and the Countess of Holderness brought their paintings to England, both collections reflecting Dutch eighteenth-century taste in their preponderance of high genre.[12] Meanwhile, collectors like Walsh Porter and Edward Coxe crossed the Channel to buy pictures cheapened by the wars.[13]

The new fashion for Dutch art was in part supply led: the many paintings which suddenly appeared on the market naturally gravitated towards English collectors, who were among the richest in Europe. This movement was fuelled by speculation. As early as 1785 Noel Desenfans amassed a collection including forty Dutch genre paintings in the hope of selling them at a profit.[14] Speculation increased after the Revolution. The dealer Michael Bryan was quick to exploit the cheap purchases abroad and adept at creating a demand for Dutch art at home. He was followed by

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[8] See William Buchanan, Memoirs of Painting, London, 1824, passim; Haskell, Rediscoveries, pp.24-84; Waagen, Art and Artists I, pp.49-56.

[9] See Buchanan, Memoirs I, pp.186-209.

[10] Skinner and Dyke, 23 March et. seq..

[11] Liss sale: 26 February, 1796 (Christie's); Fagel sale: 22-23 May 1801 (Peter Coxe, Burrell and Foster).

[12] Twenty-six out of the eighty-one pictures in Holderness's 1802 sale (Christie's, March 6) were Dutch genre paintings, fifteen of them high genre. C. M. Westmacott mentions thirty-seven Dutch genre paintings in Thomas Hope's collection (British Galleries of Painting and Sculpture, London, 1824, pp.211-40), twenty-six of which were high genre.

[13] G. Redford, Art Sales, London, 1888, I, pp.87, 99. There were sixteen Dutch genre paintings in Porter's 1803 sale (Christie's, March 22-23), eighteen in Coxe's 1807 sale (Peter Coxe, 23-5 April).

[14] See his sale, Christie's, 11-14 May, 1785; and a second sale, 8 April 1786 et. seq., after the first failed to realise the desired prices.

other dealers also specialising in Dutch art like the Fleming Philip Panné and the Frenchman Sebastian Erard, and by the ubiquitous William Buchanan.[15] Even those not dealers by profession, like the American artist John Trumbull, indulged in speculation,[16] with the result that by 1807 Peter Coxe felt the need to state that the collection of Edward Coxe, which he was selling, was formed 'for his own Gratification: he having then not the most distant intention of disposing of them by Sale'.[17] Prices for genre rose sharply from their low point in the economic slump of the late 1790s before levelling off around 1811, in which year £1730-10-0 was paid for a work by Teniers on behalf of the Prince Regent at the sale of the French dealer La Fontaine.[18] This was, in simple numerical terms, probably the highest price paid for a Dutch genre painting in England in the period covered by this study.

If the taste for Dutch art was partly supply led it was also highly fashionable. At the forefront of the trend was the Prince Regent.[19] The next most important collection of Dutch genre, that of the Duke of Bridgewater, was inherited and expanded by the Marquis of Stafford, who eventually owned around fifty Dutch genre paintings.[20] Other leading collectors of genre included the Baring family, the Duke of Wellington, the

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15 See Buchanan, Memoirs II, pp.188, 256; I, pp.271-2; II, pp.35-6, 305-58. At Panné's posthumous sale (Christie's, 26-29 March 1819) no fewer than forty-four Dutch genre paintings were put up.

16 The Autobiography of John Trumbull, New Haven, 1953, p.187. One of his sales (Christie's, 17-18 Feb. 1797) included ten Dutch genre paintings.

17 23-5 April, 1807.

18 Christie's, 12 June, lot 56.

19 See Millar, Dutch Pictures, pp.19-26; White, Dutch Pictures, pp.liv-lviii. In 1844 Jameson listed sixty Dutch genre paintings in the royal collection, many of which had been bought by the Prince Companion to the most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London, London, pp.1-60).

20 See Westmacott, British Galleries, pp.175-207.

3rd Marquis of Hertford and John Willett.[21] In the 1820s they were joined by Sir Robert Peel, Edmund Higginson and William Wells.[22] By 1824 it was claimed that 'we have not only the greatest number of the cabinet pictures of the Flemish and Dutch schools of any single country, but, perhaps, can boast of possessing as many of the finest specimens as all the countries in Europe collectively'.[23] While these collectors contradicted theoretical orthodoxy by being so interested in Dutch art, only Wells and Peel did so at the expense of Italian art. Indeed, Buchanan argued that the arrival of the Orleans pictures prompted a move away from 'the prevailing taste' for Dutch art.[24] He exaggerated, however: even after Italian pictures became more available Dutch art was still collected with enthusiasm.[25] This is surprising; in a glutted market one would expect collectors to display their discrimination by being more selective, a move which tradition dictated would push them towards Italian art. The new taste for Dutch art may, however, have been a manifestation of a different strategy of differentiation, that in which the leaders of taste espouse a commodity hitherto thought vulgar. Such moves tend to occur when a mark of taste based on absolute quality, in this case a preference for Italian over Dutch art, has become too commonplace to be useful as a definition of an

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[21] For the Barings see Haskell, Rediscoveries, p.125. For Wellington see Sutton, 'The Great Duke and the Arts', Apollo XCVIII, 1973, pp.164-7. For Hertford see Ingamells, 'The Dutch Pictures at Hertford House', Apollo CXVI, 1982, pp.319-21. There were sixteen Dutch genre pieces in Willett's 1813 sale (Coxe, May 31-June 2).

[22] Of the ninety-two paintings in Peel's London home seventy were Dutch, but only nineteen were genre (Jameson, Companion, pp.341-59). Wells' sale (Christie's, 12 May 1848) included eighty-four Dutch paintings out of 124 put up, of which twenty-five were genre. Forty Dutch genre paintings are listed in [Henry Arataria], A Descriptive Catalogue of the Gallery of Pictures Collected by Edmund Higginson, London, 1842.

[23] Somerset House Gazette I, 1823-4, p.321.

[24] Memoirs of Painting, I, p.22.

[25] The one exception was Sir Thomas Baring, who in 1814 sold over twenty Dutch genre pictures to the Prince Regent and began to specialise in Italian art (Haskell, Rediscoveries, p.127; White, Dutch Pictures, passim).

élite. 'Fashion', as Hazlitt remarked, 'is gentility running away from vulgarity'.[26] In this case the élite in question was a circle of connoisseurs, some of them associates of the Prince Regent and many of them prominent in the British Institution, a new body set up in 1806. This group increasingly stood apart from the Academy and its ideas.[27]

The Academicians contested the claim of the connoisseurs to represent an elevated taste. When the Institution inaugurated its Old Master shows with an exhibition devoted to Netherlandish art, including thirty genre paintings, in 1815, it was answered by the anonymous 'Catalogue Raisonée [sic] of the Works now Exhibiting at the British Institution', a squib traditionally and convincingly attributed to Academicians.[28] The author(s) claimed that the avowed intention of the exhibitors, to educate British painters,[29] could only mean that the pictures were included as examples of bad practice. To prove the point they recite the case against Dutch art with scabrous glee. Despite its irreverance, the Catalogue gives a useful summary of this case as it was understood in 1815.[30]

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[26] Conversations of James Northcote (1830), in Works XI, p.293.

[27] For this group see P. Fullerton, 'Patronage and Pedagogy: the British Institution in the Early Nineteenth Century', Art History V, 1982, pp.59-72, and, especially, P. D. Funnell, 'Richard Payne Knight: Aspects of Antiquarianism, Aesthetics and Art Criticism in England in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', unpub. Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1985, passim.

[28] I have retained the misspelling to distinguish this Catalogue from the Catalogue Raisonné which satirised the 1816 Institution exhibition. For a discussion of their authorship see J. Dobai, Die Kunstliteratur der Klassizismus und der Romantik in England, Bern, 1974-7, III, p.257.

[29] Catalogue of Pictures by...Artists of the Flemish and Dutch Schools [at]...the British Institution, London, 1815, Preface.

[30] Not all Academic responses to exhibitions of Dutch art were hostile, however. In 1827 Phillips advised the students to take heed of the 'beautiful' Dutch pictures exhibited by 'our royal patron', George IV, at the Institution (Lectures on the History and Principles of Painting, London, 1833, p.173).

Less controversial was Stafford's decision in 1806 to open his collection at Cleveland House to the 'public', by which was meant 'persons of the first rank, first-rate connoisseurs, and first-rate artists', on a regular basis.[31] Thomas Hope and others soon followed. While collectors had been admitting the curious since the seventeenth century,[32] as Junius's remarks on Arundel indicate, this was the first time that they had done so in such a systematic way. A further showcase for their possessions was offered by the Institution's Old Master exhibitions. The shows of 1818, 1819 and 1821 each contained over twenty Dutch genre paintings, while those of 1826 and 1827 were given over to George IV's collection of Dutch art. Such displays satisfied two desires. The first, prominent in the rhetoric accompanying the opening of a private gallery and the prefaces to the British Institution catalogues, was the philanthropic desire to raise the taste and knowledge of the public. In his catalogue to the Stafford collection, for example, John Britton claimed that the opening of the collection would result in the 'melioration of society, and expansion of human intellect'.[33] The second was the paradoxical desire to affirm the distance between the collector and those less privileged by displaying pictures too costly for the latter to buy. The capacity of Dutch pictures to act as agents of social differentiation was, I will argue, reinforced by the rarified way of looking at them advocated by Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, two theorists associated with the connoisseurs. Both purposes were served by the catalogues extolling the pictures issued to visitors to Cleveland House, catalogues which served both to educate them and to remind them of their need for education.[34]

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[31] Monthly Magazine XXI, 1806, p.543.

[32] See E. Moir, The Discovery of Britain: the English Tourists 1540-1840, London, 1964, p.61.

[33] Catalogue Raisonné of the Pictures Belonging to the Most Honourable The Marquis of Stafford, London, 1808, p.vii.

[34] Monthly Magazine XXI, 1806, p.543.

Two sorts of rationale were developed to explain why a taste for Dutch art was no longer vulgar. The first was that furnished by theories of the Picturesque,[35] which, as developed by Price and Knight, were systematic, explicit and, resting as they did on an idea of art as an object of private appreciation rather than as a vehicle of public morality, fundamentally at odds with Academic thought. If Price was conciliatory, Knight, a Director of the Institution, deliberately antagonised conventional thinkers. The second rationale, that offered by auctioneers and dealers puffing the Dutch pictures passing through their hands, was less clearly defined. In the extended catalogue note, a device borrowed from France and used increasingly at this time, dealers often praised facets of Dutch art which had traditionally been attacked, such as its minute finish and reliance on colour. That such views were heretical was tacitly admitted by Peter Coxe when, in his catalogue of the sale of Edward Coxe, he went out of his way to defend Rembrandt from the charge that his figures are vulgar by justifying the subject matter of Dutch art and extolling its qualities:

> satisfied of their Art, and confident of their Powers...[Dutch artists] did not fly from the Objects that surrounded them, in search of ideal Beauty; but gave Consequence to any Subject they took in hand, by command of Pencil and Fascination of Color:... when REMBRANDT met with Character, he knew how to describe it, not only correctly and forcibly, but even grandly.[36]

Most dealers commending Dutch art, however, did not challenge Academic orthodoxy in this fashion. Their intention was not to present a coherent theory of art but to underline the qualities of a certain picture. They therefore avoid the issue of absolute standards, praising each work without comparing it to other pictures. Comparisons are used only to claim that a Dutch artist has surpassed the Dutch school as a whole, or to liken a minor Dutch painter, such as Van Tol, to a major one, such as Dou. While dealers

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35 See J. Gage, 'Turner and the Picturesque', Burl. CVII, 1965, p.17.
36 Sale of Edward Coxe, 25 April, 1807, lot 63.

cannot be said to have been writing theory their tactics did amount to a characteristic style of writing about art. This style was far from unimportant, affecting attitudes to Dutch art and promoting collecting. Moreover, while it presented itself as atheoretical, its evasion of the hierarchies of traditional theory worked subtly to undermine the established consensus on relative values.

Sale catalogue entries may have owed something to dictionaries of artists. The first comprehensive dictionary in English, that published by Pilkington in 1770,[37] contained little original material and has therefore been ignored by students of art theory. The Dictionary's alphabetical layout, however, while it seems banal today, carried radical implications as a way of ordering art historical knowledge in 1770.[38] In effect, it encouraged a degree of relativism. Since each entry had to exist as a separate entity, Pilkington was moved to assess the peculiar qualities of each artist without judging him against an absolute scale of value or using him as a historical building block. Many of his entries were copied from J.- B. Descamps' dictionary of Netherlandish artists,[39] but Descamps' positive remarks gain added weight when set within Pilkington's dictionary of painters of all schools. While Pilkington was not trying to make a theoretical point, he does seem to have been sympathetic to the egalitarian implications of his format. His entry on Dou, which, typically offers nothing but praise, includes an original passage denouncing ignorant amateurs who 'depreciate' Flemish art:

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37 The Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painting.

38 Félibien, de Piles and Dézallier had arranged painters by school; Vasari and Graham chronologically. The only major precedent for Pilkington was Buckeridge's 'Essay', which was limited to the English school.

39 La Vie des peintres flamands, allemands et hollandois, Paris, 1753-64.

> the more judicious Italians...prize the best of the Flemish masters, according to their proportional merit; they do not rank them with their own countrymen, for elegance of taste, for beautiful forms, for grace, or true grandeur of design; but, they admire the best of the Flemings, for their sweetness of colouring, for the charming effect of their chiaro-scuro, for their delicacy of pencil, for their transparence, and their true imitation of nature, though it may not be nature in her most grateful appearance.[40]

This passage predates Reynolds' similar remarks in the Du Fresnoy notes and 'Journey' by a decade. It was thought sufficiently unacceptable to be axed in the 1805 revision of the Dictionary by the Academician Fuseli.

In the early nineteenth century dealers trying to write positively about Dutch pictures aped Pilkington's non-judgmental style. Some of them also realised that a dictionary allowed unequivocal praise to be given to artists deemed inferior by orthodox theory without contradicting that theory. Bryan wrote a dictionary in which, like Pilkington, he stressed the peculiar qualities of each Dutch artist. Again, there is no sense of an overall scale of value. While Dou is called the best Dutch genre painter, Frans van Mieris 'is considered by many' as superior to Dou. Bryan openly supported the hierarchy-dissolving relativism implicit in his format:

> there are no positive rules by which an artist is bound, in order to assure himself celebrity. Every intermediate style, from the daring and impetuous handling of Tintoretto, to the patient finishing of Douw, may conduct the painter to distinction, provided he adapts his manner to the character of the subject he proposes for his model; and that he may obtain the applause and admiration of the judicious, whether it is in the perfect representation of the human figure in its most beautiful, or in just and delicate delineation of a rose or a butterfly.[41]

Bryan does not openly challenge the hierarchy of genres or schools, merely saying that divers qualities are valuable and that we should not prejudge a painting by its subject. The point was echoed in a book of artists' lives

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[40] Dictionary, p.187. The rest of the entry is drawn from Descamps.

[41] A Biographical Dictionary of Painters and Engravers, London, 1816, I, pp.360-1; II, p.67.

by a Dutch dealer who also specialised in Dutch art, C. J. Nieuwenhuys:

> Every style of painting therefore may possess great talent, no matter what may be the subject, provided the effect produced be that of truth. We should thus judge of each genius separately, forming our observations on the intention of the painter, and consider his works as they really are, not ridiculously expecting a Correggio in viewing a Rembrandt, a Rubens in a Rafaelle, a Teniers in a Claude, &c.[42]

In the nineteenth century the dictionary format became so popular that it may be said that, if the dominant framework for ordering the history of art in the century before Reynolds was the hierarchy of schools and genres, then that of the century after Reynolds was the dictionary of painters.

A step beyond the dictionaries was the monumental Catalogue Raisonné of Netherlandish and French painting which another dealer specialising in Dutch art, John Smith, began to publish in 1829. Smith's Catalogue was the first English book to deal with Dutch art on its own terms, without qualification or deference to a larger hierarchy headed by Italian art. Even the one earlier English book devoted to Dutch art, Daulby's catalogue of Rembrandt's etchings,[43] had included a preface by William Roscoe stating the traditional critical ambivalence about Rembrandt. Smith, however, is untroubled by his admission that history is the 'noblest' genre.[44] Metsu's failure to paint history, for example, does not affect his admiration for him. He does once admit the superiority of Italian art, remarking that Terborch learnt in Italy 'a better style' than is usually found in Dutch art, but when writing on Rembrandt Smith implies that the Italians are only supreme in certain parts of the art, and those not necessarily the highest:

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[42] A Review of the Lives and Works of some of the most Eminent Painters, London, 1834, pp.235-6, cf. p.193. Nieuwenhuys also reissued the Biographical Dictionary of Painters by John Gould, London, 1838 (1st ed. 1810).

[43] A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Rembrandt, Liverpool, 1796.

[44] A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters, London, 1829-42, I, p.xxv.

> without...wasting words in deploring the absence of that elevation of character which distinguishes the Italian school, the artist has achieved that which is more difficult, and therefore more rare..., for he has given a truth and an intensity of expression most appropriate to the sacred persons, and has added charms of colour and magical effect that we may look for in vain in any other painter.

Smith presents each of his subjects as excelling in a certain way: the finish of Dou, the luminosity of De Hooch, the silver colour of Teniers, and so on. Criticisms are usually made only to praise another artist. Steen is 'superior' to Metsu in 'invention, expression, and ready execution', but in 'graceful expression, and elegance of demeanour, Metsu is without a rival'.[45] The prefaces to each painter's chapter resemble dictionary entries, with the same almost unqualified praise and unwillingness to judge by absolute standards. Smith does, I will argue, posit a hierarchy, but only one within the confines of Netherlandish art.

Similar solutions to the problem of how to praise Dutch art were arrived at by the authors of the catalogues and illustrated books which abounded in the early nineteenth century. These included commemorative illustrated catalogues, such as William Ottley's volumes of engravings after the Stafford collection, which illustrated all fifty Dutch genre paintings,[46] and the de luxe volumes claiming to reproduce the best pictures in England, such as that published by Edward Forster in which Dutch genre accounted for nine of the fifty-two prints.[47] One response was that of Britton, who, in his catalogue of Stafford's collection with its many low genre pictures, included an essay by Humphrey Repton absolving

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[45] Ibid., IV, p.94, pp.111-12; VII, pp.22-3; IV, p.72.

[46] Engravings after the Marquis of Stafford's Collection of Pictures, London, 1818.

[47] The British Gallery of Engravings, London, 1807-20. Cf. The British Gallery of Pictures, London, 1808-20, by Ottley and Henry Tresham.

Ostade from the criticisms usually made of low genre.[48] Later writers thought such apologies unnecessary. Like dealers, they dodged the issue of the inferiority of Dutch art and simply identified the qualities of the work in question.[49] Again, the inclusion of Dutch genre alongside works of other schools with no sense that it was inferior encouraged a relativistic attitude to the qualities of the various schools.

The Public

Whether the purpose of displaying pictures before the public was proselytisation or social differentiation, the practice reflects an awareness of an increasing public interest in art. This interest had been stimulated by the proliferation of public exhibitions since the 1760s, and had eventually resulted in public galleries in which art could be viewed outside the context of an overt display of social differentiation. The first of these was that opened at Dulwich in 1812, which included twenty Dutch genre paintings.[50] Despite the abiding concern that exhibitions would be overrun by the rabble,[51] the new public for art lay in the main among the bourgeoisie, among those with enough disposable income to buy prints and attend exhibitions but not, at least at first and with the

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[48] 'Observations, &c. on the Pictures by Adrian van Ostade', in Britton, Catalogue, pp.144-7.

[49] The resulting blandness of Forster's text and its dependence on Pilkington was remarked, see The Review of Publications of Art I, 1808, pp.31-2; The Examiner I, 1808, p.174.

[50] The collection was dominated by Dutch landscape (see Jameson, Handbook, pp.436-89). The National Gallery had almost no Dutch genre until the Peel gift of 1871. The many Dutch genre paintings left by the 7th Viscount Fitzwilliam and Daniel Mesman to Cambridge University in 1816 and 1834 were open to members of the public accompanied by a Cambridge M.A. (C. Wilson, intro. to The Dutch Connection: the Founding of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum exhib. cat., 1988, pp.9-14; P. G. Patmore, 'The Fitzwilliam Gallery at Cambridge', New Monthly Magazine ii XI, 1824, p.185).

[51] See e.g. Britton, Catalogue, p.vi; W. Sandby, The History of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1862, I, pp.130-1.

exception of a few, to purchase any but the cheapest sorts of painting. During the early nineteenth century this public became increasingly important in the art world, their taste affecting the production of British art and forming a new audience for writers on painting. As early as 1770 Pilkington was offering his Dictionary for 'general Entertainment and Instruction'.[52] By the 1820s the exhibition of private collections was mediated not only by laudatory pamphlets issued at the door but also by general guides which were often more critical.[53]

The most important response to the new public for art was the critical review. The earliest reviews were those written about the public exhibitions of modern art first held in 1760 and were intended to be read in front of the pictures.[54] Their authors showed little understanding of contemporary theoretical debates. One, for example, expressed that vulgar admiration for Dutch minuteness which Reynolds had tried to quash: 'this Frank Vander Mijn is...a very good Portrait Painter. He copies Nature with a true Dutch Accuracy'.[55] Another prefigured Reynolds by claiming that the 'minute Attention' to detail in Wright's portraits 'makes them appear like Nature in a Camera', but does so to praise the painter.[56] By the turn of the century, however, critics, by now usually writing in the weekly and monthly journals addressed to a largely bourgeois readership, were far

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52 Dictionary, Title Page.

53 E.g. P. G. Patmore, British Galleries of Art, London, 1824 (first pub. in the New Monthly Magazine, ii, VII, VIII & X, 1823-24); Hazlitt, Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries in England, London, 1824 (first pub. in The London Magazine, 1822-3, reprinted in Works, X).

54 One, Candid Observations, on the Principal Performances...at...the Society of Arts, London, 1772, describes itself as a 'vade mecum'.

55 A Historical and Critical Review of the Paintings...at the...Society ...of Arts, London, 1762, p.17. The painter was the son of the Van der Mijn whose minuteness had offended Vertue (Waterhouse, The Dictionary of British 18th Century Painters, Woodbridge, 1981, pp.382-4).

56 Candid Observations, p.24.

more sophisticated. Serious attention was given to theoretical issues, among them the discrepancy between traditional art theory and the growing interest in Dutch art among collectors and artists, and the problem of accommodating the new audience for art within a theoretical tradition which had hitherto dismissed any but the most elevated taste as vulgar. While all the journals were somewhat patronising about the new 'public', a word which they used with increasing frequency, some, such as the politically radical Examiner, occasionally attempted to defend its instinctive good taste and to define a sort of painting which would be morally beneficial to it. While the Examiner took up a stance in opposition to the Academy, other journals served different constituencies. The Artist, for example, was established to speak for painters associated with the Academy, while The London Magazine published a variety of views, from the conservative opinions of Thomas Waineright to those of Hazlitt, who took up a position close to that of the connoisseurs. The journals thus developed into an important forum for the discussion of ideas, one which both reached a wider readership than traditional theory and enabled the expression of both traditional and dissenting views.

The Artists

An increasing interest in Dutch painting is also seen among artists. Dutch genre exerted no more than a muted influence on English genre painting during the later eighteenth century, but, in a process discussed in more detail in Chapter Ten, an atavistic return to Dutch models became more common after the turn of the century in the work of David Wilkie and his successors. These painters transformed a visual language burdened with negative associations into a respectable style of painting, in so doing

posing problems for critics who were also compelled to acknowledge that genre was among the strongest suits of British art.[57] In the early nineteenth century artists, some of whom disagreed with Academic doctrine, also began to find new arenas within which to express their ideas. Several of them published books; the Annals of the Fine Arts was established to promote the views of Benjamin Robert Haydon's circle; and Haydon, Constable and the engraver John Landseer all lectured at institutions with no connection with the fine arts,[58] thus further demonstrating the validity of art theoretical discourse outside the Academy.

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The next four chapters discuss the effects which these changes had on the theoretical position of Dutch art. The first three focus on colour, minuteness and subject matter. Each offers a survey of the Academic position on the issue before assessing competing arguments and the attitudes of collectors and dealers. The fourth, which concentrates on journal criticism, considers contemporary reactions to the responses of artists to the same questions.

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[57] For two early instances see The Examiner II, 1809, p.425; New Monthly Magazine i I, 1814, p.169.

[58] For Constable and Landseer see below, pp.157, 163 n.63. For Haydon see Barrell, Political Theory, p.16.

Chapter VII

Colour, Chiaroscuro and the Redemption of Minuteness and Vulgarity

The Academic View

While admitting the excellence of Dutch colour and chiaroscuro, the Professors of Painting perpetuated the view that these qualities were inferior. Phillips thought northern art, compared to that of Italy:

> more nearly allied to the common, ordinary perceptions of mankind. Consequently, though this peculiar practice of painting became rich, and even splendid in colouring and chiaroscuro...it never, or but in few instances, attained an excellent degree of propriety in its application; or of perfection in grandeur or purity of form, or dignity and correctness of expression.[1]

The Professors' doubts about colour were conventional. They stressed the vulgarity of its sensual appeal, and doubted whether painting which relied upon it could claim to be a liberal art.[2] They were ambivalent about whether the colour and chiaroscuro of Dutch art redeemed its banal and tasteless subjects. Barry asked 'how many of the deservedly esteemed' Dutch pictures would be thought 'disgusting' were it not for their chiaroscuro, and remarks how Dutch drolls gain 'irresistible charms and fascination' from their colour. He also, however, implies that the colour of Dutch art cannot wholly redeem its 'trite, vulgar' subjects and

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[1] Lectures, p.146. Cf. James Barry, 'Lectures', in The Works of James Barry, London, 1809, I, pp.487, 523 (Barry was Professor of Painting 1782-99); Opie, Lectures on Painting, London, 1809, pp.122-6; Fuseli, 'Lectures', in The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli, London, 1831, II, p.355; Henry Howard, A Course of Lectures on Painting, London, 1848, p.279.

[2] See respectively Phillips, Lectures, pp.viii, xvii; Fuseli, 'Lectures', in Life and Writings II, pp.64, 331-4. Cf. Barry, 'Lectures', in Works I, pp.522-4; Howard, Lectures, p.151, 164-5; Opie, Lectures, pp.109, 132-3, 145-7.

disregard for beauty.[3] Fuseli warns that chiaroscuro may be 'the refuge of ignorance', and that colour becomes 'the handmaid of deformity' when it 'shakes hands with meanness, or haunts the recesses of loathsomeness'. He cites Ostade's 'Disembowelled Pig' (pl.34) as an example.[4] Howard took an ironical view of the claim that Dutch colour redeems Dutch subjects:

> colour, chiaroscuro and finish...were soon found sufficient to attract admiration, though employed on the coarsest and most homely subjects, till at length Painting condescended to luxuriate in transcripts of dunghills or beggars, or the revels of drunken boors, which from their great truth, and beauty of execution, and effect, found their way into all the collections of Europe.[5]

Only Rembrandt was agreed by the Professors to have fully redeemed his subjects through colour and chiaroscuro. According to Fuseli, his chiaroscuro has 'reconciled' us to the 'unpardonable faults' in his forms. He also attributed this redemption to Rembrandt's composition, a quality of Dutch art little mentioned until now:

> In spite of the most portentous deformity...such were his powers of nature, such the grandeur, pathos, or simplicity of his composition, from the most elevated or extensive arrangement to the meanest and most homely, that the best cultivated eye, the purest sensibility, and the most refined taste dwell on them, equally enthralled.[6]

Such sentiments echo the incipient formalism in Reynolds' 'Journey'. For the Professors, however, Rembrandt was an exception. Opie dissuades students from choosing him as a model, saying that the errors of the Dutch will not be forgiven again.[7] Fuseli, while admiring the colour of other Dutch artists, felt that it lacked the transfiguring magic of that of Rembrandt: 'Holland was not made to comprehend his power. The succeeding

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3 'Lectures', in Works I, pp.487, 549, 523.
4 'Lectures', in Life and Writings II, pp.276, 334-5.
5 Lectures, p.279.
6 'Lectures', in Life and Writings II, p.121. Cf. Opie, Lectures, pp.122-7; Phillips, Lectures, pp.169-73; Howard, Lectures, pp.181-2.
7 Lectures, pp.126-7.

school of colourists were content to tip the cottage, the hamlet, the boor, the ale-pot, the shambles and the haze of winter, with orient hues, or the glow of setting summer suns'.[8]

If the Academicians doubted the redemptive powers of chiaroscuro and colour they agreed with Reynolds that artists should not neglect them. This notion was encouraged by a growing realisation that it was in colour that English artists, notably Reynolds himself, had excelled.[9] The Academician M. A. Shee advocated a middle way between a style based only on line, like that of Poussin, and one based only on colour, like that of Rembrandt.[10] Phillips argued that colour, 'whatever the lovers of the severe in Italian art may say of it', is 'a very important object for the study', and, like Reynolds, claimed that Dutch colour and chiaroscuro, including Teniers' 'brilliancy' and De Hooch's 'beautiful management of colour', 'would not detract from the...grand style of design'.[11] Academic respect for the didactic power of Dutch art resulted in several Dutch pictures being borrowed for the painting school.[12] Howard's remarks on colour and chiaroscuro often refer to one of them, Rembrandt's Joseph and Potiphar's Wife.[13] The Professors were, however, wary of encouraging the natural colour of Dutch art in the highest genres. Opie, rather vaguely, advocated an 'ideal' colour which did not copy appearances but only the

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[8] 'Lectures', in Life and Writings II, p.121; cf. 'Aphorisms', in ibid. III, p.131.

[9] See e.g. M. A. Shee, Elements of Art, London, 1809, p.54; Howard, Lectures, p.130.

[10] Elements, pp.28-35.

[11] Lectures, pp.174, 335, 403-9. Cf. Opie, Lectures, pp.109, 132-3, 155-7.

[12] Among the first was Rembrandt's Girl at a Window from Dulwich (see Whitley, Art in England 1800-20, Cambridge, 1928, p.253).

[13] Lectures, pp.130, 181. The picture (now Berlin-Dahlem, Staatliche Museen) was owned by Sir Thomas Lawrence prior to his death in 1830 and was then in the collection of Joseph Neeld (Smith, Catalogue VII, no.20).

general hue of objects.[14] Fuseli, while liking the natural colour of Dutch artists like Steen, found the 'resemblance of tints' vulgar and preferred the simple colours of Raphael.[15]

Despite these doubts, the Professors followed Reynolds in giving qualified praise to Dutch art. Opie admits that Dutch paintings, for all their ugliness and particularity, give such pleasure that, while before them, we 'forget that the art has anything of a higher class to bestow'.[16] Like Reynolds, he attacks 'shallow and supercilious critics' who simply dismiss them.[17] For the Academicians it was, however, ultimately design that mattered, and colour and chiaroscuro remained inferior qualities as surely as Dutch art remained paradigmatically inferior to that of Italy. When Phillips drew up a league table of Dutch genre painters, he placed Metsu and Steen above Ostade and Dou on the basis of their better design.[18]

Colour and Chiaroscuro as Agents of Redemption

A more emphatic rise in interest in colour and chiaroscuro occured outside the Academy, where some commentators no longer saw them as inferior qualities but placed them at the pinnacle of artistic achievement. Foremost among them were Price and Knight. While proceeding from different philosophical premises both writers advocated a way of looking at pictures which concentrated on such formal qualities as colour, chiaroscuro and composition. Both held that the achievements of Dutch artists in these

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[14] Opie, Lectures, p.109. Cf. Reynolds, Discourse IV, Discourses p.64.
[15] 'Lectures', in Life and Writings II, pp.118, 355-60. Cf. Phillips, Lectures, pp.7, 147; Howard, Lectures, p.254.
[16] Lectures, p.123. Cf. Phillips, Lectures, pp.371, 148-9.
[17] Lectures, pp.123-4.
[18] Lectures, pp.7-9, 285.

areas redeemed their minuteness and subject matter. As a result they transformed the Picturesque into an aesthetic which, inter alia, furnished a theoretical justification for the appreciation of Dutch art. More specifically, they diverted it away from Dutch artists popular during the eighteenth century like Dujardin and Berchem, who had been admired by William Gilpin, the first theorist of the Picturesque,[19] and towards those like Dou and Ostade who were the darlings of the great wave of collecting around the turn of the century.

Picturesque Theory and the Redemption of Minuteness

Gilpin, conventionally, saw 'microscopic' detail as harmful to the perception of the whole.[20] Price, while disliking excessive detail, found breadth without detail equally unpleasing. His ideal was the combination of both achieved by Teniers, Ostade and other Dutch artists.[21] In his Dialogue the ingenuous 'Seymour' is shown how the extreme detail of Denner, in which 'every hair is expressed', and the colour and chiaroscuro of Rembrandt may be synthesised in pictures such as those by Dou, which may be admired both from a distance and through a magnifying glass.[22]

For Knight colour and chiaroscuro were not merely a means to redeem minuteness, but the basis of the entire art of painting. While earlier theorists had seen form as primary, colour as secondary, Knight held that the eye sees only colours, modulated by light and shade, from which the

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19 See e.g. An Essay upon Prints, London, 1768, pp.137, 206-11.
20 'On Landscape Painting', in Three Essays, London, 1792, 11.499-510.
21 An Essay on the Picturesque (1794), in Essays on the Picturesque, London, 1810, I, pp.152-8.
22 'Dialogue' (1810), in Essays, III, pp.317-323.

mind then abstracts information about form.[23] He argues that the 'first object' of painting is the faithful imitation of this basic sense data.[24] This belief leads him to deny that the art has a philosophical or moral dimension. Indeed, he limits its purpose to 'amusement', contradicting earlier dismissals of the 'empty amusement of seeing' as a worthless end.[25] Given these beliefs it is not surprising that Knight admired Dutch art. Reacting to Barry's decision to shun Dutch pictures, including works by Teniers and Schalken, for fear of being corrupted by them, he argues that these are 'the finest pictures of the greatest masters of the art, considered abstractly as the art of painting - that is, the art of employing colours to imitate visible objects with the greatest possible degree of skill, judgment, taste, and effect'.[26] Elsewhere he claims that seventeenth-century Netherlandish painters are, with the sixteenth-century Venetians, the best imitators of natural appearances, because they 'mass' the details in a way which replicates vision, giving 'breadth to the lights and shadows' and blending them together.[27] Massing is, in effect, the unification of detail through colour and chiaroscuro. Knight favours detail so long as it is subordinated to massing; in such cases imitation 'can never be too exact'.[28]

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[23] An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste (1805), London, 1808, pp.57-62. For the ancestry of these anti-Lockean ideas in the thought of Berkeley and Thomas Reid see Gage, 'Colour in Western Art: An Issue?', Art Bulletin LXXII, 1990, p.520; Funnell, 'Knight', pp.23-7.

[24] Anon. review of James Northcote's The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds in The Edinburgh Review XLVI, 1814, p.264. Hereafter as 'Northcote review'.

[25] Analytical Inquiry, p.459. Cf. Northcote review, pp.266-70. See Funnell, 'Knight', pp.70-1.

[26] Anon. review of The Works of James Barry in The Edinburgh Review XXXII, 1810, p.299. Hereafter as 'Barry review'.

[27] Analytical Inquiry, pp.149-50, 71-3.

[28] Northcote review, pp.285, 281.

Picturesque Theory and the Redemption of Subject Matter

'All the Dutch masters I dislike;' wrote Gilpin, 'their colouring does not compensate for their subjects'.[29] Price, however, realised that if the Picturesque aesthetic began as the application of a way of looking learnt from painting to nature, in order to aestheticise the decrepit or deformed, then the same way of looking might be turned back to painting to redeem hitherto despised subjects. Colour and chiaroscuro are, again, central to this process. Seymour is informed that disgusting objects like carcasses do not offend in pictures because, as in a concave mirror, their size, detail and 'light and colour' are lessened.[30] Such subjects are thus tolerable if their colour and chiaroscuro are controlled. Price also argues for the redemptive capacity of composition, as in the case of Ostade, whose monstrous figures suggest that:

> he never thought of form in any objects; but let any one carefully examine, - not merely his pictures, (for in them the excellence of colouring might seduce the judgment) but the prints from them... they will then see how in the insides of kitchens, he has selected every circumstance that can vary the forms, and give intricacy to the disposition, without injuring the unity of the whole.

Price thought 'intricacy and variety' 'the best succedaneums' for the 'elegance and grandeur' of Italian art, and argues that Dutch artists paid just as much attention to the selection and disposition of forms as the

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Letter to Mary Hartley, 16. Feb. 1790,

29 Cit. C. P. Barbier, William Gilpin, Oxford, 1963, p.114.

30 Essays III, pp.323-7. The substitution of a concave mirror for the convex mirror which de Piles claimed Dou had used to harmonise his subjects (Art of Painting, p.321) is odd, since the former gives an image empasising the periphery, not the centre. The first writer to claim that Dou used a concave mirror was probably Descamps (La Vie, II, p.220); a little earlier Dézallier's mirror had been convex (Abrégé II, p.73). Descamps was followed by Pilkington (Dictionary, p.186). Writers may have confused the words, since the effects of a convex mirror would have been well-known from the Claude glass. By the 1820s mirrors for harmonising details were convex again (e.g. Magazine of the Fine Arts I, 1821, p.175); and one critic noted that concave mirrors give the reverse effect (New Monthly Magazine ii XV, 1825, p.205).

great Italians.[31] By stressing formal qualities Price reduces the incline of the hierarchy of genres and schools, even if he is not prepared to level it. He is also able to abandon the old idea that the only quality of pictures of unpleasing subjects is the lowly one of accurate imitation.[32]

Knight agreed about the ameliorative effect of a decrease in size, arguing that the 'ulcerated foot' of Barry's Philoctetes 'though less faithfully represented than such things usually are in the paintings of Hemskirk and Jan Stein...is more disgusting, as being upon a larger scale'.[33] He went further than Price, however, finding any painted subject potentially beautiful. Since his aesthetic of the Picturesque lay in purely sensual qualities divorced from the intellect, he was able to argue that even ugly or disgusting subjects may please because paintings abstract their visual qualities from the association of ideas which they provoke:

> tattered worn-out dirty garments, a fish or a flesh market, may all exhibit the most harmonious and brilliant combinations of tints to the eye; and harmonious and brilliant combinations of tints are certainly beautiful in whatsoever they are seen: but nevertheless, these objects contain so many properties that are offensive to other senses, or to the imagination, that in nature we are not pleased with them, nor ever consider them as beautiful. Yet in the pictures of Rembrandt, Ostade, Teniers, and Fyt, the imitations of them are unquestionably beautiful and pleasing...in these copies, the mind perceives only the visible qualities; whereas, in the originals, it perceived others less agreeable united with them.[34]

Knight stresses that only those 'habituated to such discriminations' can suppress such associations of ideas, suggesting that a liking for Dutch art should now be seen as a mark of taste rather than of vulgarity.[35] He also,

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[31] 'Essay on Architecture and Buildings', in Essays, II, pp.325-6. Gilpin, by contrast, thought that there was little to recommend Ostade's prints beyond their humour and expression (Essay upon Prints, p.109).

[32] See his rejoinder to Burke's restatement of the Aristotelian argument in the 'Essay on Architecture and Buildings' (Essays, II, p.324).

[33] Barry review, p.299.

[34] Analytical Inquiry, p.18; cf. The Landscape (1794), London, 1795, p.18.

[35] Landscape, p.22.

however, implies that elevated subjects are preferable, wishing that Rembrandt had painted 'forms of grace and elegance'.[36]

Picturesque Admiration for Dutch Colour and Chiaroscuro

Regardless of their capacity for redemption, Price and Knight also admired the colour and chiaroscuro of Dutch art in their own right. Both discerned the Picturesque primarily in a muted colour range, in which local colour was subordinated to the tones of light and shade. Price found things whose colours had lost their clarity through age more picturesque.[37] Like some earlier writers he thought that landscape painters should copy the mellow colours of autumn rather than the brighter and more discordant colours of spring.[38] Price's preferred colours were exactly those found in his favourite low genre paintings, especially the predominantly brown works of the Ostades. Knight admired Rembrandt's 'mellow browns' and claimed that unmixed primary colours 'afford no pleasure to the experienced mind',[39] again associating a liking for Picturesque qualities with cultivated taste. He also thought the massing of light and shade seen in Dutch art of positive aesthetic value, arguing that artists should exaggerate the massing found in nature.[40]

The Influence of Picturesque Theory

This analysis suggests that Gage's claim[41] that one function of the theories of Price and Knight was to underwrite the new taste for Dutch art is correct. Their ideas were rapidly taken up by the apostles of the new

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36 Northcote review, p.267.
37 Essay on the Picturesque, in Essays, I, pp.160-5, 77-81.
38 Ibid., pp.172-80. Cf. Spence, Crito, p.10.
39 Landscape, pp.13, 88. For the harmonizing effect of brown see Gage, 'Colour in Western Art', pp.522-3.
40 Analytical Inquiry, pp.71-3, 148.
41 See above, p.120, n.35.

taste. In the early nineteenth century it became a cliché to assert that Dutch painters had redeemed low subjects and minuteness through chiaroscuro. Hazlitt, who, like Knight, defined the 'picturesque' as lying in purely visual qualities,[42] praised Rembrandt's ability to transform 'a common figure into an ideal object, by the gorgeous light and shade thrown upon it'.[43] Other writers endorsed the Picturesque love of tertiary colours.[44] Ibbetson advised the mixing of the primaries to make 'a universal shade or neutral tint, which harmonizes with everything, and is the master-key for coming at nature in landscape'.[45] The result, Beaumont found, was 'a brownish mud colour'.[46] Another landscape painter, Edward Dayes, commended the harmonising effect of the brown shadows of Teniers and Ostade.[47] Others, like Knight, couched a liking for such hues in élitist terms. The colour theorist George Field, whose taste in art was close to that of Price, claimed that 'the chaste eye receives greater satisfaction from the harmony of the tertiaries...the vulgar or uncultivated eye delights most in the combination of the primaries'.[48] The taste for the colours of dead leaves or clay even spread to dress, as noted by Archibald Alison in support of his argument that disagreeable colours become pleasant when adopted by people of taste, to the puzzlement of 'plain' men.[49]

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42 'The Catalogue Raisonné of the British Institution'(The Examiner IX, 1816), in Works XVIII, pp.106-11.

43 The Spirit of the Age (1825), in Works XI.

44 The most influential definition of the tertiaries was that given by Moses Harris (Natural System of Colours, London, 1770), who defined them as slate, olive and brown.

45 An Accidence, or Gamut, of Painting in Oil and Watercolours, London, 1803, cit. Gage, George Field and His Circle, Fitzwilliam Museum exhib. cat., 1989, p.14.

46 Cit. R. M. Clay, Julius Caesar Ibbetson, London, 1948, p.83. William Oram (Precepts and Observations on the Art of Colouring in Landscape Painting, London, 1810, p.36) advocated brown for similar reasons.

47 The Works of the Late Edward Dayes, London, 1805, pp.302-3.

48 Chromatics, 1817, cit. Gage, Field, p.40. Cf. the critic of the Review of the Publications of Art, I, 1808, p.215.

49 Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste (1790), Edinburgh, 1811, I, p.305.

The language of Picturesque theory was also borrowed by dealers looking to puff Dutch pictures. As early as 1794 the entry for Teniers' Fête de Village in the Dundas sale catalogue adopted Gilpin's style to remark that the 'Fore-ground is agreeably broken and varied' by utensils.[50] Dutch excellence in colour and chiaroscuro is repeatedly mentioned, especially when the painter is Ostade.[51] Most of the references to Dutch colour in the sale catalogues are, however, banal compliments; the colour is rarely said to redeem minuteness or subject matter. A more active use of the Picturesque belief in the redemptive power of colour was made by Smith, who, echoing Price, argued that Dou's detail is balanced by 'breadth and powerful effect' and brilliant colour. He also praises paintings with vulgar or banal subjects, arguing that:

> however insignificant the objects may be; if they are skilfully arranged, faithfully expressed in drawing and colour, and well relieved by a happy display of chiaro-scuro, the picture will always possess a charm, and an attraction sufficient to satisfy the real amateur of art.

This work in question was a picture of a back yard by Ostade 'rendered picturesque by the introduction of various accessories', including a pump, a colander, a boarded-up window and four haddocks. Smith thus focusses on Ostade's qualities of imitation and colour rather than the associations of the objects portrayed.[52] This way of looking, with its exclusive attention to visual qualities, is close to that proposed by Knight. The entry also reveals the modish élitism with which dealers, like the theorists of the Picturesque, sought to imbue a taste for Dutch art. 'The real amateur', imply Smith and Knight, will not be so vulgar as to look at the things

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[50] Greenwood, 29 May 1794, day 3 lot 40. In later catalogues the word 'picturesque' itself is frequently used, e.g. for a picture by Ostade in the sale of Sir James Stuart, Christie & Manson, 23 May 1835, lot 93.

[51] See e.g. Phillips, 28 June 1831, lot 24; sale of the Comtesse de Dillon, Phillips, 12 June 1835, lot 48.

[52] Catalogue, I, pp.3 (cf.33); 155 (cf.136, 148).

portrayed as he would at the things themselves, but will turn his sophisticated eye to how they are painted. It was precisely because disgust or boredom were the expected response to such subjects that it was now possible to advance their appreciation as a measure of sophistication.

Attacks on Dutch Colour and Chiaroscuro and on the Colour Brown

The growing taste for Dutch art and the stress placed on formal values by the theorists of the Picturesque did not go unquestioned. Attacks on Dutch colour and chiaroscuro, whose excellence was generally agreed, were rare, but were heard from two voices on the margins of art theoretical debate: William Blake and the author(s) of the Catalogue Raisonée. While the latter complained about Dutch subject matter and minuteness, they paid more attention to its colour and chiaroscuro, perhaps out of irritation at the stress placed on these qualities by theorists and connoisseurs praising Dutch art. They accuse Dutch artists of favouring dark, dirty colours, describing Rembrandt's sitters as coal-heavers and looking as if they had spent a week 'in the Prince Regent's new sewer'. The reference to a leading collector of Dutch art was perhaps not coincidental. Similar remarks were made about genre. An Ostade is described as 'in Clay', while a Teniers is said to be not silver but 'leaden'.[53]

In 1799, as the new taste for Dutch painting was gathering pace, Blake informed a patron of his desire to learn from the cabinet pictures of Teniers and Rembrandt.[54] If the wish was sincere he had recanted by the

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[53] Catalogue Raisonée (1815), pp.29, 35 (cf.33), 10, 47, 43.

[54] Letter to Trusler (16 August 1799), in The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake (ed. D. Erdman), New York, 1982 (hereafter as 'Works'), p.701.

time of his public pronouncements of 1809-10, in which he vilified Netherlandish art and especially its colour and chiaroscuro. Despite Blake's eccentric language I follow Barrell in finding many of his ideas traditional,[55] and I will argue that this attack was, in part, a riposte to the burgeoning taste for Dutch art and the Picturesque aesthetic through which it was validated in the name of a more traditional preference for the line-oriented Tuscan-Roman school.

Like Knight, Blake sees Netherlandish art as that of 'broken masses and broken colours'. Unlike Knight, he believes that line is supreme, and argues that the oils used in Netherlandish art encourage 'blotting and blurring', obscuring the lines in 'brown shadows'.[56] Rubens' colour is 'most Contemptible His Shadows are of a Filthy Brown somewhat of the Colour of Excrement'.[57] Blake's reasons for hating Dutch art are thus close to Knight's reasons for liking it. He answers Knight's belief that colour is the basis of painting by observing that a jockey does not choose a horse by its colour, and pillories the Picturesque belief that colour redeems poor design: 'a Monkey peeping in a Mirror / Admires all his colours brown & warm / And never once perceives his ugly form'.[58] The reference to Rubens' excremental colour is not merely scatological: Blake associates excrement with a limiting corporeality, seeing physical nature as an impediment to the imagination.[59] Artists who tackle it fall into the abuses of colour and shade seen in Dutch art: 'the Copies or Pretended Copiers of Nature

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[55] Political Theory, pp.222-5.

[56] A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures (1809), in Works, pp.527, 538, 550, 547, 530-1.

[57] Annotations to The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds (c.1798-1809), in Works, p.655.

[58] Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims (Public Address, 1809-10), in Works, p.578

[59] Descriptive Catalogue, in Works, p.546.

from Rembrat [sic] to Reynolds Prove that Nature becomes to its Victims nothing but Blots & Blurs'.[60] It should be noted that Blake's preference for line and his attack on the naturalism of Dutch colour, at least, are traditional. Reasserting the paradigm of Dutch inferiority against Reynolds' tergiversations, Blake denies that Raphael and Michelangelo could have taught Steen to have been any more than the boor he was.[61]

Unlike the Academicians, Blake saw no need to offer a limited accomodation to colour and chiaroscuro, least of all because they were now seen as the prime qualities of English art. He calls Reynolds and his followers hypocrites 'who speak Michael Angelo & Act Rembrandt'. Florentines are said to see a Reynolds self-portrait as 'a Dutch English bore'.[62] Blake blames these failures in taste on 'English Connoisseurs' who pay more for Rubens' 'Slobberings' than pictures by Raphael.[63] 'The taste of English amateurs', he complains, 'has been too much formed upon pictures imported from Flanders and Holland',[64] so that they take an inordinant interest in chiaroscuro.[65] Their taste for Dutch art is encouraged by 'Ignorant Picture dealers,' who import 'Smears & Dawbs' rather than sell British works.[66]

An opposition to the preference of dealers and connoisseurs for Old Masters and their brown patina[67] was one of the most important factors

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60 Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims, in Works, pp.574-5.
61 Reynolds annotations, in Works, p.658.
62 'Florentine Ingratitude', in Blake's Notebook, Works, p.512.
63 'To English Connoisseurs', Blake's Notebook, in Works, p.513.
64 Letter to the Monthly Magazine XXI, 1 July 1806: in Works, p.768.
65 Descriptive Catalogue, in Works, p.547; Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims, in Works, p.579.
66 Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims, in Works, pp.580-1.
67 For those who had employed this mode of valuation, including Dryden, see O. Kurz, 'Varnishes, Tinted Varnishes, and Patina', Burl. CIV, 1962, p.58.

behind dislike of the colour brown in this period. Hogarth had attacked this preference on behalf of modern artists who, he implied, use brighter hues which are more true to nature.[68] His argument, however, received little support until the early nineteenth century, when more artists began to see themselves as competing against a taste for Old Masters, and when brighter pigments opened up new possibilities to painters. Constable, who famously showed Beaumont that foregrounds in nature are not, pace the Old Masters, the colour of violins,[69] claimed not to like 'autumnal tints...so little of a painter am I in the eye of commonplace connoisseurship - I love the exhilerating freshness of spring'.[70] Beaumont's preference for Old Masters over modern art prompted the Catalogue Raisonné of 1816 to describe him as admiring one year 'a yellow Picture, next year a brown one' but always disliking 'green leaves and blue skies'.[71] Blake's equation of brown with naturalism rapidly became obsolete. If Moses Harris had counted brown as one of the nine basic 'natural' colours,[72] in the early nineteenth century the drawing master William Craig attacked artists who use 'a general tone of brown' rather than the natural hues: 'blue, yellow, orange, red, purple, violet, and green'.[73] The corollary to this way of thinking was the belief that Dutch colour was in fact unnatural, an argument made by the genre painter Henry Richter who accused the Dutch of painting in 'the shades of the stable' rather than the colours of nature seen in daylight.[74]

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68 Analysis, p.130.

69 C. R. Leslie, Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, R.A. (1843), London, 1949, p.132.

70 Letter to Leslie, 11 June 1833, in John Constable's Correspondence (ed. R. Beckett), London & Ipswich, 1962- , III, p.103.

71 A Catalogue Raisonné of the Pictures now Exhibiting in Pall Mall, London, 1816, II, p.5. For Beaumont's attack on the 'white' painters see D. B. Brown, Augustus Wall Callcott, Tate Gallery exhib. cat., 1981, p.24.

72 Natural System of Colours (1770), cit. G. E. Finley, 'Turner: an Early Experiment with Colour Theory', J.W.C.I. XXX, 1967, p.358.

73 A Course of Lectures on Drawing, Painting..., London, 1821, p.171.

74 Day-light; A Recent Discovery in the Art of Painting, London, 1817, pp.1-13.

Despite the attempts of Hazlitt to counter the attacks on the colour brown,[75] dislike of it even began to be expressed by dealers. Smith attacks Wouwermans' works in 'his bamboccio manner' for their brown tone, and discerns the same failing in Dou's Quack Doctor, a fault perhaps related to its 'very objectionable parts', by which Smith must mean the mother wiping a child's bottom.[76] What Smith liked in colour emerges from his account of Teniers, who abandoned 'brown and heavy tones' for 'those of a clear and silvery kind'.[77] Praise for Teniers' silver colour was a cliché of the sale catalogues, and it was for this quality, above all, that many esteemed him the finest genre painter.[78] Smith thus posits a hierarchy within Dutch art, with silvery painters like Wouwermans and Teniers placed above brown painters like Bamboccio, who is cited only in passing, and Heemskerk, who is not mentioned at all. Smith is careful to limit his attacks on brown to artists who rarely used a brown manner: when assessing Ostade and Rembrandt, in whose works brown is often the prevailing hue, he hardly mentions the colour.

The Rise of Colour Theory

Discussions of colour in art theory had traditionally been couched in terms of the discourse of luxury or focussed on the question of naturalism. Neither framework permitted very sophisticated analysis. The problem, as Opie noted, was that since colour is solely 'an object of sight', it is 'less under the power of language, than almost any other part of the

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75 Examiner, 3, 10, 17 Nov. 1816 (Works IV, pp.140-51, XVIII, p.105).

76 Catalogue, I, pp.200; 37. Reynolds had found the same incident 'dirty' ('Journey', in Works II, p.95; cf. Trumbull, Autobiography, p.137).

77 Catalogue, III, pp.252, 483.

78 See e.g. Dundas sale: Greenwood, 31 May 1794, lot 40. For Teniers' supremacy see Waagen, Art and Artists III, pp.342-3.

art'.[79] In the late eighteenth century, however, art theorists began to respond to theories of colour perception.[80] Colour theory taught that the copying of natural colour was not mindless but requisite of as much mental effort as design,[81] and also offered art theorists a vocabulary through which to discuss colour. According to Field, colour is 'the essential basis of the art and its end',[82] and 'it is color which the true artist most loves, and it is the perfection of coloring in all its complexity that he ever seeks to attain'.[83] While the influence of colour theory led ultimately to a taste for brighter pigments than those found in Dutch painting, the rising respect for colour did increase the esteem of Dutch art. Like Knight, Field thought Venetian and Netherlandish painters supreme because of their colour.[84] The Academician Turner, who also questioned the inferiority of colour and chiaroscuro to line,[85] offered an appreciative analysis of Teniers' use of colour.[86] In his lectures in the 1830s Constable denied that colour is 'unintellectual' and merely 'ornamental', and ranked it and chiaroscuro among the highest qualities. He admired the latter for its redemption of detail and 'trivial scenery'. Constable especially praises Dutch chiaroscuro and colour, arguing that

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79 Lectures, p.142.

80 See Finley, 'Turner', pp.357-66; Gage, Colour in Turner: Poetry and Truth, London, 1969, pp.11-12. Those influenced even included some Academicians, see John Galt, The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West, London, 1820, II, p.135; Phillips, Lectures, p.340.

81 See e.g. The Cabinet of the Arts; Being a New and Universal Drawing Book, ed. J. Dougall, (1805), London, 1821, pp.147, 206-7, cit. Finley, p.363.

82 'On Colouring', Somerset House Gazette II, 1824, p.329.

83 Chromatography: or a Treatise on Colours and Pigments and their Powers in Painting, London, 1835, p.8.

84 Ibid., p.330; cf. Chromatography, p.8.

85 See B. Venning, 'Turner's Annotated Books: Opie's "Lectures on Painting" and Shee's "Elements of Art"' I, Turner Studies II, 1982, p.41.

86 See J. Ziff, '"Backgrounds, Introduction of Architecture and Landscape": A Lecture by J. M. W. Turner', J.W.C.I. XXVI, 1963, pp.145-6.

artists in the highest genres may learn from them[87] and contending that the colour and chiaroscuro of De Hooch and Steen cannot be improved upon.[88] Those who deny Netherlandish painters poetic feeling, he argues, 'forget that chiaroscuro, colour, and composition, are all poetic qualities'.[89]

Constable may have been influenced by John Burnet, the engraver, friend of Wilkie and painter of domestic subjects.[90] Burnet's books are presented as practical treatises, but are written in full awareness of contemporary theoretical debates. They warrant consideration because they represent the furthest remove from the old aesthetic in which moral subject matter was central and colour was at best the handmaid of design. Despite admitting that it is only in the lower genres that colour is more important than 'action and expression'[91] Burnet takes little interest in such old-fashioned qualities. That he thought that his books on composition, colour and chiaroscuro[92] sufficiently covered the art is suggested by his issuing of them together as A Practical Treatise on Painting in 1827. While Burnet only touches on colour theory, he believes, like Field, that colour is a

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[87] John Constable's Discourses (ed. R. Beckett), Ipswich, 1970, pp.46, 12, 26, 65. On chiaroscuro cf. Leslie, Memoirs, p.298.

[88] Discourses, p.63. On De Hooch, who attracted increasing attention after 1830s, cf. Jameson, Companion, p.5. See also below, p.172 n.112.

[89] Discourses, p.89. For examples of his interest in genre (he owned paintings by Teniers and prints by or after Bega, Dusart, Teniers and Ostade), see Correspondence, IV, pp.423, 177. Constable's taste for low genre, like that of Reynolds, is consistent with his admiration for the colour and chiaroscuro valued in low genre rather than the minute detail of high genre. For Hazlitt's praise for the poetry of Rembrandt's chiaroscuro see Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries, in Works X, p.50.

[90] Constable echoes Burnet, for example, in distinguishing between artifical chiaroscuro, exemplified by Rembrandt, and natural chiaroscuro, examplified by Ostade. See Burnet, Practical Hints on Light and Shade, London, 1826, p.15; Leslie, Memoirs, p.291.

[91] 'A Critical Inquiry into the Principles and Practice of the Late Sir David Wilkie', in Practical Essays on Various Branches of the Fine Arts, London, 1848, p.90.

[92] Practical Hints on Composition, London, 1822; Practical Hints on Light and Shade; Practical Hints on Colour, London, 1827.

matter of great intellectual complexity standing at the centre of painting:

> of all branches of the art, coloring is the least mechanical. The eye may be taught to measure with great accuracy the distance from one point to another, and the particular form of an object as bounded by lines; but coloring is a matter of much greater subtilty, as the shades which separate one tint from another are not only less tangible, but seem less under the control of the eye.[93]

Burnet agrees with Reynolds that Dutch art is the best school for colour, both for students and for painters proficient in other parts of the art.[94] He cites Dou to show that high detail is laudable when harmonised through chiaroscuro,[95] and argues that De Hooch, through his colour and chiaroscuro 'gave a consequence...to the most trifling circumstance'.

Like Knight, Burnet believed that formal qualities could be valued without reference to subject matter. In one essay he analyses the colour of Ostade and Teniers without mentioning their subjects. Indeed, he argues that their superb colour owes much to their disinterest in subject matter:

> The Dutch pictures...are confined to brawls, merry-meetings, figures smoking, or playing at games of tric-trac;...where, if the general character is given, the colour or handling is never disturbed, by endeavouring to give a more intricate or correct delineation of the passions; neither do their figures require to occupy that situation which a dramatic story or a complicated composition demands, but merely serve the purposes of an effect of light and shade, or a beauteous combination of colour.[96]

Reversing the traditional values of art theory, Burnet praises works by Ostade in which no story interferes with the composition, and argues that 'the moral must never injure the picture in its highest requisites', meaning its formal qualities. Moral subjects are, he argues, obsolete, partly because morality is now better conveyed by books, partly because painting is not aimed at the lower classes, who are those in need of moral

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93 Colour, p.43.
94 Colour, pp.60, 54-5.
95 Light and Shade, pp.23-5.
96 'Critical Inquiry', pp.96-101.

instruction. He claims that its purpose is rather to please the 'higher classes', and that painters should therefore avoid subjects which might 'vex' the viewer.[97] Like Knight, he argues that painting is primarily sensual rather than cerebral, criticising unillustrated treatises for satisfying only 'the mind', not the 'eye'.[98] His own plates mix genres and schools indiscrimately to demonstrate abstract rules for colour, composition and shade, that illustrating 'diamond composition' (pl.36) combining prints after Correggio, Rubens, Terborch, Bamboccio and Ostade.[99] The book on colour at times does not name the artists whose works are reproduced, a move that would have been applauded by Wöllflin. In Burnet's writings, in other words, the paradigmatic way of thought with its stress on the hierarchy of schools and genres all but disappears.

While Burnet's books went through many editions, and while today his ideas appear radical, contemporaries do not seem to have found them contentious.[100] His approach may seem more radical in hindsight, in the light of the later development of a more self-conscious formalism. That his ideas attracted so little controversy, however, indicates how commonplace arguments for the redemption of Dutch art through colour and chiaroscuro had become.

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97 Composition, pp.7, 21, 19.
98 Composition, p.30.
99 Composition, pp.24-5, pl.4.
100 Even Constable thought the book on chiaroscuro 'meagre'. Letter to John Fisher, 1826, in Correspondence VI, p.229.

Chapter VIII

The Revaluation of Minuteness and Particularity

In 1807 the future Academician George Dawe argued that while the genre painter Henry Morland had followed the 'subordinate excellencies' of Dutch art, its 'high finishing and minute individual imitation', his son George had looked to its 'higher qualities' of colour and chiaroscuro.[1] Many commentators, especially those associated with the Academy, combined praise for Dutch colour and chiaroscuro with criticism of Dutch minuteness. Such criticism was, indeed, more common in the later eighteenth century than in any other part of our period. Other writers, however, began to condone minute detail as long as it was not pursued as an end in itself. This chapter will first consider the developing case against minuteness and then look at factors encouraging a more lenient response to it.

Opposition to Minuteness in the Academy and Elsewhere

Attacks on minuteness were especially common in the 1760s and 70s, the time of Reynolds' most severe censure of the minute. Reynolds' contrast between Italian art and the minute copying of Dutch art was repeated by Martyn[2] and by Webb, although the latter, who was probably indebted to a work by Mengs which was itself translated into English in 1796, also warned

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[1] The Life of George Morland, with Remarks on His Works, London, 1807, p.11.

[2] English Connoisseur I, pp.iii-v.

against the danger of an idealism which did not consult nature at all.[3] Another continental writer, Winckelmann, in Fuseli's translation of 1765, compared 'the trifling Dutch and Flemish beauties, the laboured nicety of Netscher, or Douw, flesh ivoried by Van der Werf' unfavourably to the art of Raphael. In reply to a letter defending Van der Werff, Winckelmann switched his attack to Denner, finding his minuteness disgusting and laudable only for its industry.[4] Another writer to deplore the detail of Denner was Walpole, who, like Reynolds, thought the equation of naturalism and literal imitation vulgar, complaining that the laborious detail of Van der Mijn 'is often praised by the people as natural'. Walpole's main objection to Dutch art, however, was its subject matter: he is happy to praise the German immigrant Zoffany for 'finishing as exquisitely as the Flemish' because he avoids the disgusting subjects seen in Dutch art.[5]

A less serious attack on minuteness was that made by William Beckford, in his life of the fictional Dutch artist Watersouchy. While Beckford's main aim was to lampoon collections of artists' lives, especially that by Descamps, rather than to write theory, he produced the most comprehensive critique of Dutch minuteness made by any writer.[6] Watersouchy, like his master, Dou, labours long on his works, spending a month on one hand, and

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[3] Inquiry, p.5. Mengs used Dou, Netscher and Mieris as his examples of minute imitation (The Works of Anthony Raphael Mengs, London, 1796, I, pp.17, 136). Mengs' editor, D'Azara, added a lengthy attack on minuteness in which he argues that the 'microscopic' detail of Dutch art both destroys beauty and fails to reflect what we actually see (ibid., pp.87-110, 122-3).

[4] Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks, London, 1765, pp.15-16, 39, 107, 185-8.

[5] Anecdotes IV, pp.51-4, 70, 146,

[6] Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters, London, 1780. His name is derived from the Dutch 'Waterzootje', a dish of boiled fish (see A. Parreaux, 'Les "Peintres Extraordinaires" de Beckford. Sont-ils une satire des écoles Flamande et Hollandaise?', Revue du Nord XLIII, 1961, p.16).

charges high prices.[7] To relax he writes Chapter One of Genesis on a watch-paper, adorning it with a miniature of Adam and Eve revealing 'every ligament in their fig-leaves'. Some of his tiny subjects, including mites in cheese,[8] suggest Beckford's awareness of the debates over microscopy.[9] Watersouchy's myopia leads him into some familiar faults. It causes him to lose sight of the beauty of his subjects, reducing them to sordid and meaningless fragments. In one portrait he paints a carbuncle which had 'baffled' Van Mieris 'with perfect exactitude and splendour'. In another he includes a view of Antwerp cathedral reduced to two barber's shops at its entrance.[10] He prefers to paint things to the naked human form, exclaiming: 'what opportunities does an artist lose by the banishment of dress!...in a carpet all his science is united - grouping, colouring, shading, effect, everything!' Beckford, tongue in cheek, claims that it would take over fifty pages to describe Watersouchy's picture of a tea party, affirming Reynolds' point that in being minutely particular painting loses the right to be likened to poetry. Watersouchy shuns history painting for genre, portraits and still-life. He calls a history piece in the grand manner by Giulio Romano 'an eyesore' when compared with a 'faithful representation of an apothecary's shop by Mieris'. His preferences are a travesty of good taste: he admires Dürer, and wishes that Poelenburgh had painted Dutch interiors, not classical ruins. Watersouchy's microscopic

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[7] Biographical Memoirs, pp.126-8, 151-2. Cf. Descamps on the month Dou's real pupil Slingelandt spent on a lace ruff (La Vie, III, p.98).

[8] Biographical Memoirs, pp.149-50, 156-8. Beckford stresses Watersouchy's neatness and that of the towns he inhabits, supporting the idea that the neatness of Dutch art was associated with the neatness of the Dutch people. Watersouchy is also effeminate, as Shaftesbury (above, p.79) would have expected. Cf. Anthony Pasquin [John Williams] on the effeminacy of miniaturists, Memoirs of the Royal Academicians, London, 1796, p.35.

[9] The Genesis chapter also echoes one of Power's microscopic subjects, a series of devotional passages written within the area of a penny (Experimental Philosophy, p.53).

[10] Biographical Memoirs, pp.154, 149. The barber's shops refer to Pliny's Pyreicus (see above, p.14).

vision is thus restricted to a tiny part of the world: he is as partial as Shaftesbury's minute painters and as parochial as Reynolds' Dutch artists who could only portray themselves.[11] The only writer to approach this level of facetiousness in discussing Dutch minuteness was Ibbetson, who described a picture by the Dutchman 'Nigglewig' thus: 'in the distance was a chateau of brick, the joints of which could not be discovered but by a glass; [and details] such as snails crawling up the wall'.[12]

Reynolds' objections to minuteness were repeated by the Professors of Painting. Opie, following the Idler, argued that the imitation of nature should be equated with 'the philosophic grandeur of the Roman school', not the literal copying of Dutch art.[13] While his theory of imitation was less Reynoldsian, Fuseli also attacked art which tries to substitute 'the image for the thing', citing as examples 'the microscopic precision of Denner' and the detail of Dou.[14] Following Reynolds in associating minuteness with natural philosophy, he calls Denner's 'catalogues of wrinkles...not offsprings of art, but fac-similes of natural history'.[15] After Denner was featured by Winckelmann and Walpole in the 1760s theorists increasingly came to use him, rather than Dutch painters, as the minute painter par excellence.[16] Other examples also began to interrupt the paradigmatic association of minuteness with Dutch art. Opie, like Vasari, aimed his main attack on the minute at the early style of Titian.[17] Above all, the fault was attributed to modern French artists, who Shee called:

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11 Ibid., pp.144, 129-30, 124-6, 141-3.
12 An Accidence, pp.3-4.
13 Lectures, pp.12-13, 310-11; 'On Composition in Painting', The Artist X, 1807 (London, 1810, II, pp.157-68).
14 'Lectures', in Life and Writings, II, pp.250, 140, 340, 22-23.
15 'Aphorisms', in Life and Writings, III, pp.106-7.
16 For a typical example see 'Peter Pindar' [John Wolcot], More Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians (1783), London, 1790, pp.31-2.
17 Lectures, pp.151-2.

Minutiae-mongers, microscopic wights,
Whom Denner captivates, and Dow delights;
Who spend on petty cares their puny powers,
And live to polish pores, and hairs, and flowers.

Minuteness had, once again, acquired a political dimension at the time of an Anglo-French war. This time, however, English writers were struck by the contrast between the 'licentiousness' of the revolutionary regimes and the 'servile imitation' and 'timorous detail' of the Neoclassicism they sponsored.[18] Others saw the broad brushwork popularised in England by Reynolds, Wilson and Gainsborough, and endorsed by Reynolds' theoretical preference for the general over the minutely particular, as a mark of the distance between English and French art.[19] Breadth thus became one of the distinguishing features of the newly self-conscious English school.

It now became possible to identify qualities of Dutch finishing which seemed laudable beside the detail of Denner or the French. Shee, while advising artists not to follow the Dutch, praises their faithful imitation and argues that from their best works 'the proudest pencil may learn the value of labour and patience; may perceive the possibility of being accurate and detailed, without being mean or minute'. Like Reynolds, he attacks those who depreciate Dutch art out of affectation.[20] Phillips, despite opening his lectures with the Dutch-Italian paradigm, and despite attacking minute finishing of the whole picture of the sort practised by Dou, thought such overall minuteness acceptable 'in subjects, where there is no point of interest particularly prevailing', as in most Dutch pictures. 'Beautiful execution' is part of the excellence of such works.[21]

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[18] Rhymes on Art, London, 1805, pp.2-3 (cf. Elements, pp.320-23).

[19] E.g. Pasquin, Memoirs, p.22; the New Monthly Magazine i I, 1814, p.169; and Lawrence's comparison of his own style with that of Gérard, The Diary of Joseph Farington (ed. K. Cave) XIII, New Haven & London, 1984, p.4724 (28 Oct.1815).

[20] Elements of Art, London, 1809, pp.215-20, cf. 35-42, 273-4).

[21] Lectures, pp.5-6 (cf.147-8), 411-15.

Echoing Knight but also looking to Reynolds' 'Journey', he claims that: 'as exhibitory of the power of the art of painting, that is, the mere power of imitating to the most perfect degree of precision, the productions of nature', the 'palm of excellence' belongs to Netherlandish painters. He adds, however, that such perfect imitation must be subordinated to the subject if the art is to reach beyond the manual to the intellectual. [22]

Phillips' successor Howard, however, returned to the point made by Reynolds seventy years earlier, warning that 'the vulgar error of supposing that nothing can be natural but what is drawn from an individual type...is apt to start up again'. He goes on to present a traditional case against minuteness, arguing that artists should avoid that commitment to 'positive truth' which results in 'disagreeable and repulsive' images. Criticising the 'microscopic minuteness' of Denner and Van der Heyden, he argues that:

> A strict copy of all the complicated details of nature is evidently impossible. We cannot represent the individual hairs of the head or leaves of a tree, nor if we could, would the effect be agreeable. The reflection of Nature herself in a camera obscura will never satisfy the eye as a picture; art requires a more decided subordination of all the parts of the whole. [23]

The next two sections examine the changes which prompted the beleaguered tone taken by Howard in his rehearsal of of Reynolds' second Idler letter.

Natural Philosophy and History, the Victory of the Moderns

Behind Howard's concern that painters should not depict 'positive truth', down to every hair and leaf, lay a resurgence of the debate over painting's relation to science. By the late eighteenth century the battle

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[22] Ibid., pp.174-5 (cf. p.7), 413.
[23] Lectures, pp.62-8, 19-30, 250-1, 256.

of the Ancients and Moderns was largely forgotten. The empirical approach to natural philosophy promoted by the Moderns was, after a time when it had been derided by the literati,[24] enjoying a new esteem. This made Reynolds' reintroduction of scientific empiricism into the discourse of painting as a negative figure problematic, especially since painters like Stubbs were finding an empirical analysis of nature increasingly attractive. In his later writings Reynolds tried to accommodate this challenge, claiming that while landscapists should not copy nature's details in their works, they should study their subjects 'anatomically'.[25] Reynolds' belief that the imitation of minutiae was of no more than scientific interest[26] was, however, questioned by other writers wishing to revive the idea that the sciences were a proper model for the painter. The two principal foci of this debate were, as Howard recognised, anatomy and botany.

Barry began the debate over anatomy by claiming that Michelangelo's attention to 'minutiae' showed that Reynolds' belief that minuteness and grandeur were incompatible was wrong. Barry went on to adjust the Dutch-Italian paradigm, arguing that Michelangelo was no less attentive to particular detail than the Dutch.[27] For Haydon it was the anatomical detail of the Elgin Marbles, which arrived in England in 1806, which proved the compatibility of grandeur and detail.[28] He argued that Reynolds' claim that beauty depends on the rejection of 'singular forms', particulars and

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24 See Nicolson, 'Microscope and English Imagination', pp.47-9, for the tendency to see the microscope as a mere toy for the amusement of ladies; and M. 'Espinasse, 'The Decline and Fall of Restoration Science', Past and Present 14, Nov. 1958, pp.72-7.

25 Discourse XI, p.199.

26 See above, p.103.

27 An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England (1775), in Works II, pp.243-4.

28 Lectures on Painting and Design, London, 1844, I, pp.178-9. Cf. The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, II, pp.15-16 (10 April 1816).

details had 'ruined' English art.[29] Several Academicians, however, reacted against the new interest in anatomy.[30] Shee contended that anatomists, in looking only at details, lose sight of the beauty of the whole body.[31] Anthony Carlisle, Royal Academy Professor of Anatomy from 1809, argued that anatomy should only be seen in natural history subjects, and that painting does not 'profess to gratify the curiosity of [natural] philosophers, but to shew nature under the most interesting and graceful forms'.[32]

Another focus for the debate over detail was the landscape in Titian's St Peter Martyr. The dispute over its significance began when Reynolds contested Algarotti's claim that the plants were copied with botanic exactness.[33] Reynolds contended that Titian had in fact painted them with restraint, unlike the Dutchman Van Lint, who painted every leaf. Artists, he argues, should work for 'the common observer', not 'the Naturalist.'[34] Later writers discussed the role of detail in landscape through the figure of botany thus raised. Shee condemned Raphael for copying the plants in his Transfiguration so accurately 'as to challenge the painful fidelity of Paul Potter, and furnish a treat to the botanist'.[35] Constable, however, argued that Titian combined botanical accuracy with a subordination of the parts to the whole, a reading which tallied with his belief that artists should hold a scientific respect for nature's details.[36] He presented this

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[29] Lectures, I, pp.178-9. Cf. 'To the Critic on Barry's Works [Knight] in the Edinburgh Review, Aug. 1810', The Examiner V, 1812, p.94.

[30] Among the exceptions were the Academy's first Professor of Anatomy, Barry's friend William Hunter (see Dr William Hunter at the Royal Academy of Arts (ed. M. Kemp), Glasgow, 1975, pp.38-41).

[31] Elements, pp.70-3. Cf. Opie, Lectures, p.27.

[32] The Artist XVII, 4 July 1807, pp.10-11. For a riposte from the Haydon camp see the Annals of the Fine Arts II, 1818, pp.480-3.

[33] An Essay on Painting Written in Italian, Glasgow, 1764, p.71.

[34] Discourse XI, in Discourses, pp.199-200.

[35] Elements, p.36. Cf. Carlise, in The Artist 17, 4 July 1807, p.1; Dayes, Works, p.306.

[36] Discourses, pp.46-8, 57, 39.

argument to the Royal Institution, a scientific body, and it was perhaps because of his audience that Constable also revived Shaftesbury's idea that landscape painters should be likened to natural philosophers.[37] For Constable, unlike Shaftesbury, the comparison was a positive one.

The Elgin Marbles and the St Peter Martyr may be seen as failed paradigms, their interpretation as examples of the resolution of detail and grandeur by one part of the artistic community being rejected by another. The quarrels over their meaning are symptomatic of the breakdown of the paradigmatic way of thought in art theory. The debates over the roles of anatomy and botany in painting had two principal consequences for Dutch art. In the first place, they provided further alternative cases for the discussion of detail, thus reducing the extent to which Dutch art was seen as the quintessential example of minuteness. In the second place, they reveal the growing importance placed on the accurate imitation of nature's details: as will be discussed below, many of those who admired scientific detail also admired the detail of Dutch art.[38]

A similar positivism began to be seen in attitudes to history in painting. By the late eighteenth century the empirical approach of the Moderns had also been victorious in historical methodology.[39] A minute approach was once again celebrated by antiquarians, one author offering

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[37] Leslie, Memoirs, p.343.

[38] An exception was Barry, who, while admiring the 'essential' details of the body, its bones and muscles, disdained the superficial minutiae such as wrinkles and veins which he found rendered with 'laborious, ignorant diligence by Rembrandt, Du Sart, and others' ('Lectures', in Works I, p.418). Those who disliked anatomical detail also tended to dislike the detail of Dutch art. A correspondent of the Magazine of the Fine Arts countered Hazlitt's reading of the Marbles as like casts from nature by arguing that minute finishing will produce only a Dou or Mieris, not a Michelangelo or Raphael (I, 1821, pp.171-7).

[39] See Levine, Humanism and History, pp.178-213.

'documents, illustrative of some of the more minute particulars of English history'.[40] This development may have contributed to the growing concern with getting archaeological details right in history painting.[41] This concern, which contradicted Reynolds' advocacy of a history painting transcending time and place, was beginning to be registered in art theory. Fuseli raised the 'Historic' mode, with its concern for factual accuracy, if not for trivia, to the level of the Dramatic and Epic modes.[42] Craig argued that history painters require 'a knowledge of the dresses and manners of different countries, at different epochas [sic] of their history, and also of different classes of persons in those countries'.[43] Aside from reflecting an increased respect for factual accuracy in all painting, this development also lessened the gap between genre and history painting. The costume history paintings of artists like Bonington are both strongly influenced by the high genre tradition and quite similar to the costume genre painted by contemporaries like G. S. Newton (see below p.221).

Attacks on Reynolds' Theory of Imitation

Another reason for Howard's concern was that the opposition between the particular and the general, which constituted the basis of Reynolds' case against minuteness, had come under question. The origins of this change lay in the aesthetics and literary theory of the preceding century, in the shape of the growing belief that an imitation of general nature was either impossible or of less value than an imitation of the particular.

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[40] Alfred John Kempe, The Losely Manuscripts, London, 1836.

[41] See R. Rosenblum, Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art, Princeton, 1967, pp.33-7.

[42] 'Lectures', in Works, II, pp.177-8. Cf. Barrell on Barry, Political Theory, p.193.

[43] 'To the Readers and Students of the Preceding Excellent Treatise', in Lairesse, A Treatise on the Art of Painting, London, 1817, II, p.290.

While this development has been discussed elsewhere[44] it is helpful to offer a summary of these ideas as they affected the theory of art.

Reynolds' theory of the general, based as it was on an a posteriori abstraction, was probably derived from Locke's concept of general ideas.[45] This concept had, however, been attacked by Berkeley and Hume, who argued that we cannot have a general idea of, say, the concept 'triangle', but only an idea of a particular triangle which may then represent all other triangles. All ideas are thus particular.[46] This principle was adapted by Scottish aestheticians who argued, via the current understanding of ideas as cerebral visualisations, that general terms were unsuited for poetical imagery because they do not produce distinct pictures in the mind. Hugh Blair claimed that 'no description, that rests in generals, can be good; For we can conceive nothing clearly in the abstract; all distinct ideas are formed upon particulars'.[47] Both Blair and Lord Kames advocated minutely detailed poetic imagery, advising poets to take painting as a model:

> In narration as well as in description, objects ought to be painted so accurately as to form in the mind of the reader distinct and lively images...if a circumstance be necessary, however slight, it cannot be described too minutely...The narrative in an epic poem ought to rival a picture in the liveliness and accuracy of its representations.[48]

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[44] E.g. S. Elledge, 'The Background and Development in English Criticism of the Theories of Generality and Particularity', P.M.L.A. LXII, 1947, pp.177-82; H. W. Taylor, '"Particular Character": an Early Phase of a Literary Evolution', ibid., LX, 1945, pp.161-74; R. Park, Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age, Oxford, 1971, pp.104-7; W. J. Hipple, The Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque, Carbondale, 1957, pp.99-147.

[45] An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689), Bk II, Ch.XI, s.9. For Reynolds and Locke see Hipple, The Beautiful, pp.136-7.

[46] Berkeley, A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (1710), in Works II, pp.32-5; Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40), Bk.I, Pt.I, s.7.

[47] Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, London, 1783, II, p.372. Cf. Kames, Elements of Criticism, Edinburgh, 1762, III, pp.198-200.

[48] Kames, Elements III, pp.174-5, cf. Blair, Lectures II, p.371. Both writers, however, opposed excessive or redundant detail, see e.g. Blair, Lectures II, p.377; Kames, Elements III, p.175.

While the notion that a poetic image should be judged by the mental picture it raised was not new,[49] the belief that it should therefore be detailed and particular was. The idea was also voiced by English literary critics. For Joseph Warton, good language lies in 'raising, clear, complete, and circumstantial images, and in turning readers into spectators'. Poets should therefore give 'true and lively, and minute, representations of Nature', rather than 'generalities'. Warton even reversed the distinction between poetry and history, arguing that the former is more 'minute and particular' and thus a more 'faithful representation of nature'.[50]

In advancing painting as a model, however, these critics were not thinking of the minute particularity of Dutch art. For Kames beauty in painting depends on 'suppressing the smaller parts as much as possible'.[51] When Warton makes comparisons with painters he always refers to Italian artists.[52] In 1796 Alexander Knox compared the vivid evocations of Cowper to Raphael's sketches, the laboured descriptions of Thomson to the 'most highly finished' Flemish pictures.[53] For these writers painting was by definition a determinate particular art, and it was superfluous to demand further minuteness from it. Poetry, however, might easily slip into the vague and general, and should therefore keep the model of painting in mind.

Other literary theorists argued that it was precisely painting's determinacy which made it a bad model. This 'anti-pictorialism'[54]

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49 See J. H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts, Chicago, 1958, passim.

50 An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope, London, 1756, I, pp.48-9, 223-30. Cf. Richard Hurd, Q. Horatii Flacci, Epistolae ad Pisones et Augustum (1749), London & Cambridge, 1776, p.59.

51 Elements of Criticism, I, pp.28-30, 293.

52 Essay on Pope, pp.223-30.

53 The Flapper, 14 May 1796, in Elledge, Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays, II, pp.1105-6.

54 See Park, Hazlitt, pp.121-30, for this movement.

originated in the old paragone argument that painting, due to its ability to show 'all the minute and various' circumstances of an event at once, was better at description, while poetry was better at expressing emotion.[55] Among those who advanced this idea was Coleridge, who followed Burke in arguing that painting, in its determinacy, tends to reduce the mind to 'passivity', and that the poet should therefore aim to produce 'a strong working of the mind' rather than 'a distinct form'.[56] Coleridge uses the minuteness of Dutch art as a figure for what poets should avoid: 'the power of genius was not shewn in elaborating a picture of which many specimens were given in Poems of modern date, where the work was so dutchified by minute touches that the reader naturally asks why words and not painting were used?'[57] It was specifically Dutch art which Coleridge took as his model for the minute copying of particular nature, although elsewhere he attributed this error to all painting since Raphael.[58] He also uses Dutch art to illustrate his distinction between copying and imitation,[59] arguing that Juliet's nurse is not like a portrait by Dou in which every hair is microscopically rendered, but rather the result of imitation, which is to say that for all her particularity she attains the universal relevance of general nature.[60] Coleridge thus answered the reaction against general ideas by claiming that the particular might attain universality.

Two currents germane to the question of minuteness thus emerged from literary theory and aesthetics after the mid-eighteenth century. The first

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55 James Harris, Three Treatises, London, 1744, pp.77-97.

56 Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757), Notre Dame, 1958, p.58; Coleridge, Lectures on Shakespeare, 1811-2 (Lectures 1808-19 On Literature, Princeton, 1987, I, p.311).

57 Ibid., I, pp.361-2.

58 Table Talk, New York, 1853, p.335 (June 25 1830).

59 Lectures on Principles of Poetry, 1808, (Lectures, I, pp.83, 224).

60 Lectures on Shakespeare, 1811-2, (Lectures, I, pp.307-8).

was the denial of the possibility of general ideas, a belief which led either to the claim that poetic imagery should raise a particular form or, conversely, that it should frustrate the attempt to perceive such a form. The second was the use of painting as the epitome of minutely determinate imagery. None of the critics discussed above deviated from the traditional belief that Dutch painting was inferior; it was left to the theorists of painting to use these ideas to bring about a revaluation of Dutch art.

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Art theorists reacted slowly to these developments, perhaps because the respectability of painting in traditional theory rested on the belief that it should not copy particular nature, perhaps because Reynolds had based his theory so firmly on this premise. Opie, for example, dismissed philosophical attacks on general ideas as irrelevant to art theory.[61] As in Shaftesbury's day, art theorists had good reason to resist new philosophical ideas which seemed to undermine the standard defence of painting as a liberal art. Nevertheless, by the late eighteenth century the influence of the new ideas were beginning to be felt. Even Reynolds began to take a more leniant view of minuteness and particularity, although he gave no sign of realising the dangers that such a move posed for his theory of imitation.[62] Other writers attempted to reconcile philosophical attacks on the concept of general ideas with Reynolds' theory of imitation. John Landseer writes that 'in Moral Philosophy, general ideas...have sometimes been denied to exist; but in Art, they may be rendered obvious, may be returned back to the sense from whose particular impressions they

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61 Lectures, p.16.
62 See above, pp.110-11.

are constituted and abstracted'. Landseer thus feels that the expression of the general is feasible in painting because painting necessarily gives a determinate shape to what it depicts. He infers from this that 'generic' forms should be painted in particular detail: he denounces the 'blotting and smearing' of British art, seeing it as inspired by a misunderstanding of Reynolds' ideas.[63] While Coleridge advocated a particularity with general resonance, Landseer thus advocates the particular realisation of the general. Fuseli borrowed Coleridge's distinction between copying and imitation, further subdividing imitation into 'ideal and 'iconic'. In the latter the artist imitates a particular model but not in every detail, distinguishing the 'native and inherent' from the accidental through a comparison of the model with the central form of the species or class to which it belongs.[64] Fuseli and Landseer thus took a step away from Reynolds' rigid division between the general and the particular.[65]

Other writers were less willing to reconcile the new ideas with Reynolds' theory of imitation. They shared not only the belief that such an accomodation was impossible, but also a hatred of the broad style which, they felt, Reynolds' ideas had inspired.[66] Among them was Blake, who dismissed Reynolds' theory of imitation on the grounds that general nature cannot be known or seen: 'Unless You Consult Particulars You Cannot even

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63 Lectures on the Art of Engraving, London, 1807, pp.146-157. The lectures were delivered to the Royal Institution.

64 'Lectures', in Life and Writings II, pp.312-4.

65 For a more unusual attempt to defend Reynolds' theory of imitation using Kant's criticisms of the same Scottish philosophical tradition which had questioned Reynolds' Lockean epistemology, see Richter, Day-light, pp.17-66. Richter used Denner, rather than Dutch art, as the quintessential painter of the particular.

66 This dislike began to manifest itself even within the Academy, for example in Shee's concern that English breadth was often equated with poor drawing and his advice to painters to follow a middle route between the English and French extremes (Elements, pp.53-4, 64-5; Rhymes, pp.3-4).

Know or See Mich: Ang. or Rafael or any Thing Else'.[67] Blake's preference for particularity is allied to a liking for the minute, but he was unique in defining minuteness as a linear fidelity to the artist's vision.[68] Blake, as much as Reynolds, disliked the empirically exact copying associated with Dutch art,[69] and hated minute finishing, 'smoothd up & Niggled & Poco Piud'.[70] He was also unusual in admiring 'mechanical' execution,[71] although, again unconventionally, he denies that this quality exists in Dutch art and discerns it in Raphael.[72]

Knight, who shared Blake's respect for the mechanical, was more sympathetic to Dutch art. Given his belief that painters should imitate appearances, a belief in great part derived from Scottish philosophical criticism,[73] Knight predictably attacks Reynolds' notion that artists should paint general nature:

> we cannot think that the discrimination of Rembrandt would have, in any degree, debased or misbecome the figures of Raphael; nor does the great patriarch of the Roman school seem to have thought so himself: for in his easil pictures, he has discriminated, as far as his powers of imitation, which in these matters was but imperfect, would allow.[74]

The same belief leads Knight to attack painters who form too 'exalted' notions of painting as an intellectual endeavour and 'too humble notions of it as an effort of manual labour',[75] and to denounce young artists who

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67 Reynolds annotations, in Works, pp.648, 645, cf. p.641.

68 Ibid., pp.643-7, 657; Descriptive Catalogue, in ibid., p.541.

69 Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims, in Works, pp.577-8, 574-5. For Blake the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns was still alive; he discusses Bacon, Newton and Epicurus as if they were minute philosophers, obsessed with mortal nature at the expense of the spiritual world (Reynolds annotations, in Works, pp.659, 660, 645).

70 Descriptive Catalogue, in Works, p.576. The remark refers to such high-finishing English engravers as Strange and Woollett.

71 Reynolds annotations, in Works, pp.637, 643,

72 Ibid, p.652; 'To English Connoisseurs', in Notebook, Works, p.513.

73 See above, p.133 n.23. For Knight's debt to the associationism of Archibald Alison see Funnell, pp.11-14.

74 Northcote review, pp.285, 281.

75 Barry review, p.293.

disdain 'the lower detail of nature'. Like Haydon, he attributes the broad brushwork of British art to a laziness encouraged by Reynolds' preference for the general.[76] Reversing the usual argument, he contends that no artist has 'been able to paint great things well, who could not also paint little things,' citing by way of example Raphael's Cardinal Bibbiena, in which 'Teniers might have envied the fidelity, delicacy and transparency' with which the 'books, and hourglass' are finished. Here again Knight reverses the traditional hierarchy, placing Dutch artists over Italians on the grounds that they are superior imitators of nature.[77] Others even inferred that Knight saw Teniers as equal to Michelangelo,[78] although he never published quite such a heresy himself.

Knight does, however, argue that painting should not depict details beyond those that are visible. He criticises pre-1500 art for taking an ontological rather than sensational attitude to imitation:

> this was rather copying what the mind knew to be, from the concurrent testimony of another sense, than what the eye saw...even had it been practicable to the utmost extent and variety of nature, it would not have been a true representation of the visible appearance of things: for the eye, when at a sufficient distance to comprehend the whole of a human figure, a tree, or a building, within the field of vision, sees parts so comparatively minute as the hair, the leaves, and the stones or bricks, in masses, and not individually.[79]

He also attributes this fault to recent German and Dutch painters, presumably Denner and the later fijnschilders.[80] Knight favoured the tempering of high detail through the massing of light and shade, in the manner of vision, like Constable finding his ideal in the St Peter

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[76] Letter to Barry by 'R.J.L.', who Funnell (Knight pp.280-7) identifies as Knight (Barry, Works, p.262). Republished in Annals of the Fine Arts, London, 1819, III, pp.75-8; cf. Northcote review, p.285.

[77] Barry review, pp.300-1. Cf. Funnell, Knight, pp.140-2.

[78] Annals of the Fine Arts III, 1817, p.272.

[79] Analytical Inquiry, p.149.

[80] Northcote review, p.285.

Martyr.[81] Knight thus retains some Dutch artists as exemplars of improper minuteness, while praising the school as a whole for redeeming minuteness through colour and chiaroscuro. A similar move was made by Price, who contrasted the harmful minuteness of Denner with Dou's combination of microscopic detail and harmonising chiaroscuro.[82] By stating that one sort of minuteness is good, another bad, the theorists of the Picturesque affirm that a taste for the minute is not always a naive response to the wonders of high fidelity, but may be a sophisticated preference. They thus appropriate for the cultural élite a quality which, like colour, had once been thought vulgar, and use it to justify the taste of that élite for art like that of seventeenth-century Holland.

Hazlitt, who shared many of the tastes of the Picturesque theorists, joined Coleridge in denying the validity of general ideas.[83] Spurning Landseer's compromise, he asserts that painters 'cannot make the general particular, the infinite and imaginary defined and palpable'.[84] Like Knight, he thought painting 'essentially an imitative art' which must imitate particular nature.[85] Since Dutch painters fulfil these basic requirements, faithfully imitating particular nature, Hazlitt is willing to give them limited praise despite their low subjects:

> We forgive them. They perhaps did better in faithfully and skilfully imitating what they had seen, than in imagining what they had not seen....We should not assuredly prefer a Dutch Fair by Teniers to a Cartoon by Raffaelle; but we suspect we should prefer a Dutch Fair by Teniers to a Cartoon by the same master;

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[81] Barry review, p.300. He did not, however, admire the anatomical detail of the Elgin Marbles.

[82] An Essay on the Picturesque (1794), in Essays, I, pp.152-8.

[83] Hazlitt also joined Coleridge in attacking pictorialism in poetic imagery, see his denigratory comparison of Crabbe with Dutch art, The Spirit of the Age (1825), in Works XI, pp.164-6.

[84] 'West's Picture of Death on the Pale Horse', The Edinburgh Magazine, Dec. 1817, in Works XVIII, pp.137-8.

[85] The Spirit of the Age, Works, XI, p.166.

> or we should prefer truth and nature in the simplest dress, to affectation and inanity in the most pompous disguise.[86]

Hazlitt describes the forte of Dutch art as 'the exact and laborious imitation of natural objects...with every variety and nicety of detail, the pencil performing the part of a microscope'.[87] Unlike earlier writers, he does not see this as censurable. His praise for Dutch naturalism was, indeed, contingent upon a reappraisal of the value of detail in painting.

Hazlitt, like Haydon, saw the Elgin Marbles as proof that Reynolds was wrong that detail and grandeur were incompatible,[88] and denounces the 'gross' style, with its omission of detail, encouraged in England by his error.[89] Elsewhere he argues that detail is not only essential to the art of imitation but also integral to the pleasure to be derived from it, claiming that Dutch pictures of disagreeable subjects like 'a boor smoking' please not only because of the truth of the imitation, but also because this truth allows us to scrutinise the visual qualities of the thing imitated divorced from the associations it bears:

> Art shows us nature, divested of the medium of our prejudices. It divides and decompounds objects into a thousand curious parts, which may be full of variety, beauty, and delicacy in themselves, though the object to which they belong may be disagreeable in its general appearance, or by association with other ideas.

Such a way of seeing particularises vision in a way that would have appalled Shaftesbury. Like Shaftesbury, Hazlitt champions disinterested looking, but for him the disinterest is visual rather than moral. He uses the figure of microscopic vision not to stand for an improper empiricism,

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[86] 'The Fine Arts', in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1816), reprinted in Painting, and The Fine Arts...by B. R. Haydon, Esq and William Hazlitt, Esq., Edinburgh, 1838, pp.27-8.

[87] 'The Catalogue Raisonné of the British Institution', The Examiner, 3 Nov. 1816, in Works XVIII, p.107.

[88] 'On the Elgin Marbles', The London Magazine, Feb. 1822, in Works XVIII, p.147. Cf. 'On the Ideal', The Champion, 8 Jan.1815, in ibid., p.81.

[89] 'On the Imitation of Nature', Works XVIII, pp.70-71.

but to praise the fragmentary vision encouraged by the art of imitation:

> To a person lying with his face close to the ground in a summer's day, the blades of spear-grass will appear like tall forest trees, shooting up into the sky; as an insect seen through a microscope is magnified into an elephant. Art is the microscope of the mind, which sharpens the wit as the other does the sight; and converts every object into a little universe in itself.[90]

Dutch pictures, he argues, 'show that there is nothing in nature, however mean or trivial, that has not its beauty, and some interest belonging to it, if truly represented'.[91] The theory resembles that of Knight, although Hazlitt is more enamoured of painting's ability to isolate objects as if in a museum, than its capacity to abstract their visible appearances.

While Hazlitt argues that accurate imitation is essential in all art, and that many of the best works have this fidelity in the highest degree,[92] he believes that great art must also include beauty and grandeur of subject: 'the historical painter is superior to the flower-painter, because he combines or ought to combine human interests and passions with the same power of imitating external nature'.[93] For this reason he at times claims that Dutch art is no more than imitation, complaining that in comparison to more animated works like those of Hogarth Dutch genre is 'mere still-life'.[94] Hazlitt did not, moreover, praise detail without reservation. He attacks not only the gross British style, but also the 'finical' French style, which gives nothing but detail.[95] In the latter detail is not subordinated to the whole, as in a portrait by Denner which reveals every

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90 'On Imitation', The Examiner, 18 Feb. 1816, in Works IV, pp.72-7.
91 Painting, and the Fine Arts...by Haydon and Hazlitt, pp.27-8.
92 'The Catalogue Raisonné', in Works XVIII, pp.106-11.
93 Ibid., pp.75-6.
94 Lectures on the English Comic Writers (1818-19), Works VI, p.138.
95 'On the Imitation of Nature', The Champion, Dec. 25 1814, in Works XVIII, pp.71-5.

hair.[96] Hazlitt, like Knight, dislikes detail which exceeds what we can see. He accuses Denner of painting the face 'as it might appear through a magnifying glass, but certainly not as it ever appears to us'.[97] Hazlitt thus uses Denner and the French as the quintessential painters of improper minuteness. The only Dutch painters whose finish he finds excessive are late seventeenth-century classicists like Van der Werff or Italianate landscapists such as Berchem,[98] while painters like Hobbema and Teniers stand for the detailed but accurate imitation of nature. In distinguishing between good and bad sorts of minuteness Hazlitt is thus able to praise certain Dutch paintings for their minute fidelity to nature.

In the wake of these writers it became, as Howard implied, quite usual to equate correct imitation with a detailed style. One writer advocating the reconciliation of detail and grandeur even claimed that high finishing was a higher attainment than its opposite, that a 'dashing style of drawing may be acquired by a common mind, because it is only manual dexterity'.[99]

Greatness of Size and Greatness of Manner

Shaftesbury's belief in the importance of size was revived by Barry, who, dismissing the notion that English houses have no room for large history paintings, claimed that the works of the Carracci in the Farnese gallery 'do not occupy more wall than we bestow upon the very expensive Flemish, Dutch, and other trifles, piled one over another, in many of our

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[96] Characteristics: in the Manner of Rochefoucault's Maxims (1823), in Works IX, p.214.

[97] 'On the Imitation of Nature', Works XVIII, p.72.

[98] E.g. Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries, in Works X, p.60; Painting, and the Fine Arts...by Haydon and Hazlitt, p.28.

[99] 'Finish in Portrait- Painting' (the argument is in fact applied to all genres), Library of the Fine Arts I, 1831, pp.120-9.

rooms.'[100] This stab at the taste of connoisseurs for small paintings was answered by Knight, who responded to Barry's vast pictures for the Society of Arts by attacking the 'erroneous principle' of 'confounding greatness of size with greatness of manner'. Pictures, he argues, need only be big enough to be intelligible, and the painter should seek sublimity through expression rather than scale.[101] Elsewhere he argues that very large works fail to fulfil painting's task of reproducing vision, since the viewer is unable to see the detail and the whole simultaneously.[102] While painting on a large scale continued to have its supporters,[103] and while the period around 1800 saw the painting of several very large works, proponents of size were now forced to defend their preference against those less convinced of the equation of quantity and quality.[104] Even Reynolds saw greatness as lying in greatness of manner, not greatness of size, a quality closer to Shaftesbury's ellipsis than his hyperbole.[105]

Minuteness in Commercial Writing on Art

Catalogue entries around the turn of the century suggest that the high finish and detailed imitation of Dutch art which had long been valued by collectors remained an index of quality. Genre painting is often discussed as if it was still-life with staffage, the intention being to draw attention to the skill and labour with which the *parerga* are finished. The

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100 *Inquiry*, in *Works*, II, pp.246, 242.
101 Letter by 'R.J.L.', in ibid., pp.259-67.
102 Barry review, pp.299-301, 307-9. Cf. Northcote review, p.276.
103 See e.g. Robert Hunt in *The Examiner* VIII, 1815, p.569.
104 See e.g. William Hayley, *A Poetical Epistle to an Eminent Painter* (1778), London, 1789, p.8; Dayes, *Works*, p.213; 'Peter Pindar', *More Lyric Odes*, p.30.
105 In an early note he equated the greatness valued in poetics with the 'largeness of Parts in pictures', not with the painting as a whole (MS Commonplace Book, c.1730-41, Y.C.B.A. MS Reynolds 33, inside front cover).

catalogue for the 1794 Dundas sale, for example, stressed the utensils in several of the pictures by Teniers.[106] After 1800, in a climate of growing sympathy for minuteness, auctioneers felt able to place still more emphasis on high finish and subsidiary details. The catalogue of Willett's sale proclaimed the detail of a 'Philosopher' by 'Van Heckell' (Van der Hecken), whose minute finishing of utensils may be seen in another work (pl.36):

> If the laborious attention which celebrated Artists pay to the accurate finishing of subjects such as these, were alone to be taken into consideration, no estimation, however high, could compensate for their industry: - but when that careful application produces effects so magical and over powering, and gives to minuteness the force of grand and magnificent objects, the value is considerably enhanced...The Carpet, Books, Globe, Flowers, and Chandelier, are all depicted with truth, brilliancy, and accuracy.[107]

Here the expected qualification after the word 'but' is replaced by still further praise for the effects of minuteness. In 1822 Dou's Poulterer's Shop attracted similarly lavish praise for its illusionism (pl.37).[108]

It was in the works of Smith and Nieuwenhuys in the 1830s, however, that unabashed praise for Dutch minuteness reached its peak. Smith commended Dou for dwelling 'with inexhaustible patience upon all the minutiae of his art'. In the ultimate story of the costliness of a minute painting he tells how Dou's La Femme Hydropique was valued at half a million francs and taken as part payment for a levy raised on Turin by Napoleon.[109] Nieuwenhuys praises the small pictures of Frans van Mieris, painted laboriously with the aid of a magnifying glass 'with such

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106 Dundas sale: day one, lot 19; day three, lot 40.

107 Peter Coxe, 31 May - 2 June, 1813, lot 58 (cf. lot 34 by Dou).

108 Beckford's sale, Christie's, 1 Oct. 1822 et.seq., day seven, lot 70. The picture, bought the following year in Phillips' Fonthill Abbey sale (9 Sept. et.seq.) by John Smith for £1330-10-0, was later owned by Peel. It is now in the National Gallery.

109 Catalogue I, p.xxvi. The theme of a painting saving a city was venerable, cf. Pliny's tale of how Demetrius did not set fire to Rhodes in order not to burn Protogenes' Jalissus (Natural History 35, xxxvi).

minuteness as to set at defiance the most finished miniature painter'.[110] Small size, intense labour and microscopic detail here become signs of quality, not marks of bad taste. Such remarks signal a shift in the taste for Dutch genre. Between 1790 and 1815 that taste had been focussed on low genre, with support from theories of the Picturesque.[111] In the next two decades, however, interest turned increasingly to high genre.[112] This shift is reflected in the shape given to the Dutch school by both Smith and Nieuwenhuys. Eleven of the sixteen genre painters given full entries by Smith specialised in high genre (Appendix IV). The most notable omissions, in the light of earlier taste, are Brouwer and the Bamboccianti. Smith's list was repeated by Nieuwenhuys, who omitted only Van der Neer, Van der Werff and Netscher.

Dealers used various devices to reconcile their praise for Dutch minuteness with theoretical orthodoxy. One strategy was to balance the claim that some Dutch artists had painted details in an acceptable way with the admission that others had not. Smith wrote of Slingelandt that his detail, still more elaborate than that of Dou, was incompatible with genius and failed in its aim of naturalism. Similarly, Willem van Mieris (pl.38) is compared unfavourably with his equally high-finishing father, Frans.[113] Smith flatters his clients by saying that 'learned connoisseurs' will have

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110 Review, pp.300-1.

111 In 1806 William Collins Sr praised the picturesque roughness of Ostade and Teniers over the finish of the fijnschilders (Memoirs of...the Late George Morland, London, 1806, p.200). In 1803 Buchanan thought the Ostades, Teniers and Dou the most popular Dutch artists among his customers (William Buchanan and the Nineteenth-Century Art Trade, ed. H. Brigstocke, London, 1982, p.79).

112 Around 1830 a Dutch artist named Brondgeest working in the style of De Hooch had some success in England (see e.g. Library of the Fine Arts I, 1831, p.164).

113 Catalogue, I, pp.3, 50, 90; IV, p.72. For similar criticisms of Willem van Mieris and Slingelandt see Nieuwenhuys, Review, pp.224-6, 292.

the taste to understand these distinctions. This tactic again implied a hierarchy of Dutch genre, which for both Smith and Nieuwenhuys was headed by Dou, Frans van Mieris, Metsu and Steen. Smith began his Catalogue with Dou, calling him 'a perfect master of all the principles of the art; which, united with consummate skill and labour, enabled him to produce the most perfect specimens that have ever come from the easel of a painter.'[114] Smith is not putting Dou above Italian painters, but rather declaring the irrelevance of Italian art to assessments of Dutch art, replacing the idea of Dutch art as the negative term in a paradigmatic dualism with the belief that Dutch painters should be compared to their own kind.

The tendency to validate certain Dutch high-finishers by attacking others is also seen among non-commercial writers. Patmore, for example, contrasts the finishing of Metsu with the unnatural detail of Van der Werff.[115] The latter, the darling of early eighteenth-century collectors, became increasingly unpopular. In 1844 Jameson described his style as:

> laboriously smooth and finished. In this respect his pictures are curiosities, and as such have been much admired, and once sold, like gems, at the most extraordinary prices; but the total want of truth and feeling, the insipid uniformity of feature in his lifeless, bloodless, mindless personages, render him to me one of the most insufferable of painters. I should prefer to his cold insipid elegance, the coarsest of Adrian Brouwer's drinking bouts.[116]

Waagen saw the minuteness of Willem van Mieris and his contemporaries as a decadent phase of Dutch art.[117] After 1840 the highest finishers began to slip from the canon. Jameson omits Slingelandt, Willem van Mieris and Van der Werff from her list of leading genre painters (Appendix IV), and by

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[114] Catalogue, I, p.3.

[115] British Galleries of Art, pp.122-3. Cf. Ottley, Engravings of the Marquis of Stafford's Collection IV, pp.101-2, 150.

[116] Companion, p.59. For earlier attacks on his excessive finishing see Reynolds, 'Journey', in Works II, pp.99-100; Dayes, Works, p.219.

[117] Art and Artists II, pp.11, 331-3.

1865 Leslie and Taylor were expressing surprise that Reynolds had ignored De Hooch and Maes, while 'much is said of Vanderwerf', on whom few modern critics 'would waste a word'.[118]

Attacks on the Taste for Minute Art

The taste for Dutch detail, like that for Dutch colour, prompted counter-attacks. Even writers sympathetic to Dutch art found an unalloyed taste for the minute hard to stomach. This emerges from Hazlitt's remarks on the collection of Beckford, who, paradoxically, shared Watersouchy's fondness for the minute and bought highly detailed works of all ages, from Holbein through Elsheimer to Dutch genre painters including Dou, Netscher, Slingelandt, Metsu and the Mierises.[119] Hazlitt accused him of rejecting:

> every great name in art, to make room for idle rarities and curiosities of mechanical skill...his taste...is the quintessence and rectified spirit of still-life...It is obviously a first principle with him to exclude whatever has feeling or imagination ...every thing approaching to grace, or beauty, or grandeur.

Hazlitt does not object to Beckford's taste for Dutch art, indeed, he admires his pictures by Teniers and Ostade. What he despises is rather his preference for the little over the grand. He derides Beckford's criticism of a Veronese as 'too coarse and muscular', a view which echoes Watersouchy's opinion of Giulio Romano.[120]

The Catalogue Raisonée was more indiscriminate in its attack. An Ostade is 'very laboured and hard', while the 'faithfully depicted' dirt

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[118] Life and Times of Reynolds II, pp.340-1.

[119] Life at Fonthill 1807-22 (ed. B. Alexander from Beckford's letters), London, 1957, pp.103, 142-3, 223, 235-6, 244-7, 305, 313, 168-9. Phillips, Fonthill Abbey sale, 9 September 1823 et.seq..

[120] Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries, in Works, X, pp.58-60; cf. 'Fonthill Abbey', The London Magazine, Nov. 1822, in Works, XVIII, pp.173-80. Cf. Beckford, Life at Fonthill, p.143.

under the nail of one of Rembrandt's sitters is pointed out as a 'filthy' detail. A Van der Werff is called a 'Birmingham tea board', a common metaphor for an over-smooth finish.[121] The author(s) poke fun at pictures whose sole quality is high finishing. A Terborch is simply 'a satin gown, quite as interesting as a satin gown can be'. They also accuse the Institution of promoting a trivial way of looking at art: 'we are all now getting to know the particular manner in which each painter scrubbed his canvas with his pencil and deemed ourselves quite learned in the art, when we can distinguish this man's hand-painting from that'.[122] This approach had earlier been derided by Barry:

> Our dilettanti and picture collectors (for the most part) misemploy the little time they bestow upon the arts, in the pursuit of long lists of names and trifling anecdotes of Flemish, Dutch, or obscure Italian artists; they value themselves upon their discernment in distinguishing the different styles, manners, touches and tints...

For Barry such matters should be left to painters, and connoisseurs should rather use their education to check 'the over-fondness for mechanical excellence' of artists, reminding them of 'weightier matters'.[123]

Like Barry, Haydon associated this way of looking with a taste for Dutch art. He did not dislike Dutch art per se, arguing that artists like Teniers and Steen are masters of minor qualities from whom history painters can learn, and whose work is dismissed only by the affected.[124] He hated rather the 'technical nonsense of dutch connoisseurship' with its taste for

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[121] Catalogue Raisonée (1815), pp.46, 34, 54. For tea boards see e.g. Pindar, Farewell Odes for the Year 1786 (1786), London, 1789, p.2.

[122] Catalogue Raisonée, pp.44, 24.

[123] 'Some Errors in the Present State of Connoisseurship' (Works II, pp.257-8). Cf. Winckelmann, 'Instructions for the Connoisseur' in Reflections, p.151.

[124] 'Painting', in Painting and the Fine Arts...by Haydon and Hazlitt, p.194 (first published in this volume). Cf. 'To the Critic on Barry's Works', The Examiner V, 1812, p.64.

'mere mechanic deception'. Haydon contrasts the scrutiny of details involved with the general survey which enables the moral significance of the whole to be understood:

> instead of standing at an awful distance, and surveying with dread great works...instead of being ambitious of having their souls elevated, and their minds expanded, instead of this, to see them rush, with their heads jammed as if in a wedge, clap up their glasses before a Picture, 'three feet long and two feet wide,' and uttering exclamations of ravishment and rapture, at a smutty crock...What do they admire in it? The character of the mind? No, the dutch part, the touching, the knives, the pewter plates.

Haydon asks whether a 'mindless imitation of carrots' can 'stimulate a Man to Heroism...or excite a Man to virtue?'[125] He accuses connoisseurs of taking painting out of the public domain into their living rooms, where they inspect their details for 'after dinner' amusement. Answering Knight, he defends large pictures as better able to fulfil painting's moral role.[126] Other painters also disapproved of the connoisseurs' love of the minute. Henry Tresham, an Academician, argued that the 'grovelling details' of Dutch art common in 'private picture galleries', distract the mind from 'elevated imagery'.[127] The genre painter William Collins blamed the interest in detail which, as the cliché says, 'it requires a magnifying-glass to enjoy', on the fijnschilders and those selling their works.[128]

Haydon seems to have been right to claim that the connoisseurship of Dutch art and a minute scrutiny were integral to the rise of a new

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[125] Diary III, pp.5-7 (23 July 1808). For later attacks on collectors for preferring Dutch imitation over the noble subjects of Italian art see Annals III, 1818, pp.278-81; London Magazine I, 1820, p.71; IV, 1821, p.287.

[126] 'To the Critic on Barry's Works', The Examiner V, 1812, p.61.

[127] The Sea-sick Mistrel; or, Maritime Sorrows, London, 1796, pp.12-13. Cf. Fuseli, 'Aphorisms', in Life and Writings, III, pp.148-9.

[128] Journal of 1826, in W. Wilkie Collins, Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq. R.A., London, 1848, I, pp.271-2.

privatised aesthetic.[129] The small, private scale of Dutch art began to be praised as a positive virtue, as in Jameson's claim that Peel's Dutch pictures fulfil 'their original purpose and destination, which is that of familiar and domestic companionship'.[130] As Collins suggests, the notion that Dutch detail could only be appreciated with a magnifying glass became a cliché in the early nineteenth century.[131] While the image of a connoisseur with a glass was an old trope,[132] lenses do indeed seem to have been used.[133] Such scrutiny may be contrasted with the distant viewing once advocated by the French Academy. Parallel changes occurred in attitudes to connoisseurship. While Richardson had stated that pictures which instruct are to be valued over those which merely please, no matter how well painted, and warned against admiring 'the just representation of common nature, without penetrating into the idea of the painter, and the beauties of the history',[134] Nieuwenhuys recommended the analysis of handling, what he calls 'the handwriting of the painter', and the examination of details as indices of authorship.[135] His approach, which entails the close scrutiny of a picture rather than the distant viewing necessary to understand a subject, would find its apotheosis in Morelli's focus on tiny details later in the century. The point is not that the minute examination of pictures had not occurred before, but that now it was being recommended. That this was so owed much to the need to provide theories better tailored to a taste for Dutch art.

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129 For this aesthetic and for its importance in the writings of Hazlitt see Barrell, Political Theory, pp.314-28.

130 Companion, p.342. Cf. Waagen, Art and Artists II, p.27.

131 See e.g. Smith on Slingelandt, Catalogue I, p.57.

132 See e.g. Hogarth's satire of an admirer of Old Masters as a monkey with a lens watering dead trees (A Catalogue of the Pictures... Exhibited by the Society of Artists of Great-Britain, London, 1761).

133 E.g. that used by George IV to examine cabinet pictures by James Ward. See 'Memoir of James Ward R.A.', The Art-Journal I, 1849, p.181.

134 'Connoisseur', in Two Discourses, pp.39-45. See also above p.53.

135 Review, pp.244-6.

Chapter IX

'Most Uncomely Coarsenesses': the Problem of Dutch Subjects

The last two chapters discussed how dealers and connoisseurs diverted attention from the ugly or banal subjects of Dutch genre by stressing its formal qualities and powers of imitation, promoting a way of looking which treated the pictures as almost subjectless.[1] For some the ability to appreciate pictures with bad subjects even began to seem a mark of taste. Landseer defended the 'coarse' figure of Rembrandt's Woman Bathing (pl.39) by arguing that in unpleasant subjects we are 'left more at leisure' to judge a work's 'technical or professional merits'.[2] Another writer ranked the capacity of 'a genuine amateur' to 'relish every thing good of its kind', from the works of Michelangelo to 'the boors of Ostade', among the 'delights of true connoisseurship'.[3] By 1821 Craig was noting that Dutch pictures were sought eagerly by people 'of taste, solely on account of the exquisite skill and truth with which the imitation of nature is rendered'.[4]

Such sentiments again worked to exclude those without sufficient 'taste' to forget the subjects of the pictures before them. Among them was

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[1] The possibility of this approach, whose most famous proponent would, of course, be Fromentin, had been pioneered by Reynolds. While the fame of Reynolds and Fromentin has led to the view that Dutch art was always seen as subjectless before the rise of the 'emblematic' approach in the twentieth century (Alpers, Art of Describing, pp.xvii-xix), one of the aims of this thesis is to show that the possibility of looking at Dutch art as subjectless was in fact hard-won.

[2] A Descriptive, Explanatory, and Critical Catalogue of Fifty of the Earliest Pictures Contained in the National Gallery, London, 1834, pp.326-9.

[3] Somerset House Gazette II, 1824, p.78.

[4] Lectures, pp.80-1 (my emphasis).

one critic who disapproved on the way in which connoisseurs and dealers focussed attention on the 'mechanical dexterities' of Dutch low genre:

> So far from the choice of subject, or the feeling it could create, being now thought by connoisseurs important considerations in judging a work of art, the picture-dealers-cognoscenti have actually so far overcome the sense of the common decencies of life, as to induce ladies to look, without offence, at well painted pictures of Dutch vulgarity and obscenity.[5]

According to Craig, Teniers' pictures of 'the unseemly excesses of drunken boors and profligate women' should not be hung in rooms 'where females assemble'.[6] At least one female agreed. In 1838 Lady Palgrave called a kermis by Steen she saw at the Institution 'a most coarse and disagreeable picture: one to which I would be sorry to give house room'.[7] At the Academy Opie accused the Dutch of thinking that 'ugliness was beauty',[8] while for Barry the difference between Netherlandish and Italian art lay not in the level of detail but in the ugliness of the life models, the 'flabbiness, guts and deformity', chosen by the former.[9] Ottley complained of the Fleming Craesbeck's Peasant Dressing a Wound (pl.40) that 'the artist piqued himself upon his skill in representing that which a better taste would have taught him to avoid.'[10] Repton was still more damning:

> As the Italian School constantly endeavoured to exalt the human character, and to surpass nature in ideal grace, and dignity of form and expression, so the Dutch school seems to have generally aimed at degrading nature, by selecting low, vulgar, and gross subjects, representing men when they are losing their reason, and brutifying into mere animals. If we examine the favourite subjects of either Tenier's [sic], we rarely discover any passion ...except the progress of intoxication, from the vacant stare of stupidity, to the utmost extremes of rage or brutal drunkenness; with hardly any countenance in a whole crowd that possesses commmon intelligence, manly dignity, or female grace.[11]

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5 The London Magazine I, 1820, p.71.

6 'To the Readers', p.284. Craig's complaints about low genre echo Lairesse, in the 1817 edition of whose Treatise his essay appeared.

7 Letter, 4 Aug.1838, to her father, Dawson Turner, tipped in to vol. of sale catalogues, B.L. 7856.e.24. The picture was owned by Higginson.

8 Lectures, p.122. Cf. Howard, Lectures p.280; Tresham, Minstrel p.56.

9 Inquiry, in Works, II, pp.243-5.

10 Engravings of...the Marquis of Stafford's Collection III, p.89.

11 'Observations', p.144.

These remarks suggest that, by the early nineteenth century, those depictions of transgressive appearance and behaviour which had once been valued as comic had become widely unacceptable among those unwilling to follow the connoisseurs in ignoring them. This development was abetted by the growing belief that poverty, deformity and misfortune were not funny unless accompanied by some unnatural incongruity such as affectation or caricature.[12] A taste for 'ridicule' was replaced by one for the 'amiable humour' of character and eccentricity.[13] Some of the proponents of the new amiable humour denied that Dutch art was funny at all. Francis Grose, for example, followed Walpole in arguing that most Dutch genre painters 'have mistaken indecency, nastiness, and brutality, for wit and humour'.[14]

Also significant was the declining importance of the comic-tragic divide in the art theory of the early nineteenth century. Few writers on art in this period used it, and for none is it an important structuring principle. Shee coupled 'the drolls of Batavia', with comedy, contrasting both with tragedy, but he does not denigrate comic art, hoping that critics will 'condescend to smile with Ostade and Teniers'. Elsewhere he focussed on the formal qualities of Dutch art rather than its subjects.[15] Knight saw tragedy as concerned with the general, comedy with the particular, illustrating the contrast by comparing the art of Raphael with the 'ridiculous' art of Rembrandt. He only discusses Dutch art in this way once, however, and in singling out Rembrandt he was in part making the

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12 E.g. Francis Grose, An Essay on Comic Painting, London, 1788, p.14.
13 See Tave, The Amiable Humorist, pp.164-243.
14 Essay on Comic Painting, p.16.
15 Elements, pp.218-20.

Reynoldsian point that Dutch art is funny when it attempts subjects beyond its powers. Elsewhere he sees comedy as stemming from incongruity.[16] The declining importance of the comic-tragic divide was encouraged by the new respect for tragi-comedy in literary theory. The first manifestation of this trend in art theory was Charles Lamb's claim that tragi-comedy, as seen in the art of Hogarth, is closer to life than either tragedy or comedy and therefore superior to both.[17] Hazlitt, recognising that this move made the comic-tragic divide obsolete as a basis for the hierarchy of genres, argued that it was not because he was comic that Hogarth was inferior to Raphael, but because he had not painted the ideal.[18]

The decreasing possibility of articulating a hierarchy of genres through the comic-tragic divide hastened the demise of the association of Dutch genre and low comedy, an association which the Academicians, following Reynolds, largely ignored. Dutch pictures are still occasionally called drolls, but by now the term is little more than a label, and is rarely seen in sale catalogues. This suggests that its connotations of low humour were no longer a good selling point. Significantly, the word droll begins to be applied to caricatures in this period.[19] While the 'humour' of low genre is still mentioned, it now lies less in the satire of transgression than in the 'amiable humour' of eccentric rustic characters, as in this account of Ostade's Boors Drinking at Dulwich (pl.41):

> One of these old worthies is admiring the brilliancy of his ale in a glass, and carolling forth its praises; another is

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[16] Analytical Inquiry, pp.294, 409-17. For one of the last attempts to use the comic-tragic distinction to place Dutch genre see Maria, Lady Callcott, Essays Towards the History of Painting, London, 1836, p.172.

[17] 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth', Reflector II, 1811, pp.61-77.

[18] Lectures on the English Comic Writers (1818-19), Works VI, p.148.

[19] See e.g. M. D. George, Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire, London, 1987, p.57.

> delighting himself with his pipe; while the third is entertaining them and himself with the dulcet tones of his violin. The verisimilitude of nature, both in colour, chiaroscuro and character, have been seldom better depicted than in this exquisite delineation of vulgar humour.[20]

The critic is condescending but not derisive; he asks us to smile at the amusements of low life rather than laugh at its transgressions. Over and above the subject, he stresses the truth and formal qualities of the work.

Other writers often ignored comedy altogether when discussing Dutch low genre. For Hazlitt, Hogarth is the quintessential comic genre painter, while Teniers exemplifies perfect imitation.[21] Attitudes to Hogarth were central to changing ideas about the comic in art; his renewed popularity around the turn of the century both encouraging and reflecting the belief that humour lay in incongruity and caricature rather than deformity and gross behaviour. His installation as the epitome of comic painting made it increasingly hard to see works containing no ostensible narrative or moral as comical. As will be discussed in Chapter Ten, British genre paintings of the early nineteenth century, which often did contain ostensible narratives, were far more likely to be described as comic than Dutch genre. The one Dutch genre painter still often seen as funny was Steen, the most Hogarthian of them all in that his humour rests more on incongruity and on an obvious moral than that of his compatriots.[22] Jameson described his The Effects of Temperance, in Beckford's collection, as an 'eloquent moral lesson; Hogarth never painted anything finer in point of humour, and it has the advantage of being good-humour. It should be engraved by or for the

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[20] Annals I, 1816, p.399.

[21] 'On Mr Wilkie's Pictures', The Champion, March 5 1815, in Works XVIII, pp.97-100. Cf. Grose, Essay on Comic Painting, pp.16-21.

[22] The only painters thought funny by Passavant in his Tour of a German Artist in England (London, 1836, I, p.50, II, p.209) were Hogarth and Steen.

Temperance Societies'.[23] One catalogue even claimed Steen as the inventor of Hogarth's dramatic and moral 'graphic wit', although strangely enough in a history painting, recalling Reynolds' view of his history pictures.[24] While the growing taste for Steen in early nineteenth century England may have reflected the renewed taste for Hogarth, the redemption of Hogarth on the grounds that he was a moral painter and a chronicler of the tragi-comedy of life was less easy to apply to other Dutch genre painters.

New Ways of Reading the Subjects of Dutch Low Genre

Decorum and Positive Images of Peasant Life

The depiction of transgressive behaviour in Dutch low genre had not become questionable only because such behaviour was no longer thought funny. The problem was tied to the crisis around the turn of the century concerning the representation and representability of the poor. The reasons for this crisis are complex and can only be touched on here. One factor was the growth of the cities. In art and literature the urban mob gradually replaced the peasantry as the main site of the transgession of polite values. Attempts to idealise the countryside as a repository of positive morality or a site for peaceful retirement resulted, but these were confused by rural unrest and the fear of sedition.[25] As a result the traditional visual language for depicting the lower classes came to seem problematic, encouraging those like Repton unable to forget that in looking at low genre they were looking at pictures of peasants to call for decorum in this sort of painting.

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[23] Companion, p.46. Cf. Waagen Art and Artists I, p.231. The picture, now lost, is reproduced in Masters of Dutch Seventeenth-century Genre Painting, Philadelphia Museum of Art exhib. cat., 1984, p.322.

[24] Exeter Hall, 15 March 1833 (George Robins).

[25] For the best discussion of these problems see Barrell, The Dark Side of the Landscape, Cambridge, 1980, passim.

Such writers began to distinguish between low genre painters who had presented acceptable images of the poor and those who had not. Repton's attack on Teniers was written to excuse Ostade from the same faults. He argues that Ostade's Man with a Glass of Liquor (pl.42):

> betrays no vacuity, no vulgarity, no absolute intoxication: it is a cheerful happy countenance; and by the decent and reverential attitude of the hand with the hat, is expressed humility, and perhaps gratitude, for the festivity of which he is a partaker.[26]

Drinking was an acceptable subject, then, so long as the topers looked happy, were not too drunk and maintained an air of submissive gratitude. Ottley wrote of a picture by Sorgh (pl.43), also owned by Stafford, that it lacks the qualities required 'to give value to representations of this class. We look in vain for the humour of Brower or Ostade. The Company seems "a cup too low".'[27] By 'humour' Ottley must mean the humour of character rather than the comedy of the drolls, which was by definition vulgar. Social tensions may have inspired even what seem to be more simple calls for decorum in low genre. An example is Repton's claim that an 'offensive utensil' (a spittoon) in Ostade's 'Lawyer' in the Stafford collection must have been added by a later hand, and that the work would be improved by its removal. In the meantime it was, for reasons of 'delicacy', hung in a dark corner and 'avoided' by ladies.[28] The point being made is that Ostade never transgresses the bounds of decency, but the passage also shows how the depiction of an object connoting both low society and a gross bodily function now seemed improper within a polite setting.

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26 'Observations', p.145.

27 Engravings IV, p.114.

28 'Observations', p.146. By 1818 the offending picture had left the Stafford collection (it is omitted from Ottley's all-inclusive Engravings of that year), and it has since disappeared.

Another aspect of the new decorum was an emphasis on those low genre painters whose subjects were the least disagreeable. In early nineteenth-century art theory references to Heemskerk decline, while praise for low genre is usually directed at Ostade and Teniers, partly in the belief that their superior executive skills would better divert attention from their subjects, partly because their subjects were less offensive in the first place. Heemskerk is only cited when an example of the lowest and most disgusting sort of low genre is needed, as in Knight's comparison of the foot of Barry's Philoctetes to similar things painted by Heemskerk.[29] Shee qualified his praise for Dutch art by warning that 'the claims of merit' should not be 'so deranged, as to deck the brows of Hudibras or Hemskirk with the wreaths of Homer and of Raphael', a remark which implies that Heemskerk is the lowest of Dutch painters and which, by referring to Hudibras, returns him to the scurrilous Restoration artistic demi-monde which he had inhabited.[30] Pictures attributed to Heemskerk are rare in important sales after 1790, and those in minor sales fetch very low prices and are auctioned early, as are those by other painters like Craesbeck whose works also seemed indecent.[31] Smith and Nieuwenhuys never mention Heemskerk, while Buchanan warned Irvine, his agent, that in buying Dutch art he should avoid 'disagreeable subjects'.[32]

Meanwhile, the plum spots at the end of the sale and the extended catalogue entries were reserved for Teniers, the Ostades, Steen and the high genre painters. A new interest was taken in artists like Dusart, Bega

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29 See above, p.136.

30 Elements, p.217.

31 In Daniel Daulby's sale three Heemskerks were sold for a combined price of 2-18-0 (27 August 1798 (T. Vernon), lots 13, 20, 27). Very few sales in this period had more than one or two Heemskerks.

32 Letter, 3 June 1803, in Brigstocke, Buchanan, p.79.

and Maes who had painted the positive images of peasant domesticity which supplanted scenes of drunkenness in the Netherlands in the late seventeenth century (Appendix I). In 1844 Jameson praised A Girl at Work by Maes owned by Lord Francis Egerton for its 'sentiment of home-felt tranquility and feminine occupation', comparing it to Walter Scott's characterisation of Jeanie Deans, the humble and virtuous heroine of Heart of Midlothian.[33] In 1834 Allan Cunningham called Teniers 'the Burns of domestic painting', extracting 'the poetry out of humble life'.[34] A few years earlier the sort of literature compared to Dutch genre had been more likely to be that whose prime characteristic was seen as literal truth to nature, whether in an admiring review by Scott himself of Jane Austen's Emma,[35] or in Hazlitt's condemnation of Crabbe's 'fidelity' to 'the most trite, the most gross and obvious and revolting part of nature'.[36] Nine years later Cunningham denied that Ostade had sunk to the level of Crabbe's depictions of 'wretchedness'.[37] In the early nineteenth century Ostade's later pictures of happy, domesticated peasants were far more esteemed than his earlier drolls, perhaps because they carried a special appeal in an age of working class unrest. Jameson describes his subjects as 'indoor scenes of domestic comfort and enjoyment, or out-door scenes of rural plenty and repose'.[38] The Prince Regent paid £1050 for just such an indoor scene in La Fontaine's sale in 1811 (pl.44).[39] This development again resulted in the articulation of a hierarchy of low genre with Teniers and Ostade at it peak, rather than the lumping together of all low genre paintings as drolls.

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33 Companion, p.142. In the 1830s Waagen noted an increased interest in Maes's 'quiet domestic scenes' (Art and Artists II, p.65).

34 The Cabinet Gallery of Pictures by the First Masters of the English and Foreign Schools, London, 1834, II, p.114.

35 Quarterly Review XIV, 1815, p.197.

36 The Spirit of the Age (1825), in Works XI, pp.164-6.

37 Cabinet Gallery II, p.22.

38 Companion, p.32.

39 Christie's, 12 June, lot 59 (see White, Dutch Pictures, no.132).

The move away from the most disgusting low genre subjects may also be seen in English reproductive prints. In the mid-eighteenth century most of the prints made after Dutch genre reflected the taste for 'fancies' then prevalent. In their mezzotints after Dutch genre McArdell and Purcell followed a formula close to that which they used for their prints after Mercier, featuring single figures, often young and pretty, engaged in simple actions above coy titles. Examples include McArdell's Happy Peasant Girl after Molenaer (pl.45) and Purcell's Philosopher of Bacchus after Van Harp. Even after the fashion for this language declined the portrayal of ugliness and coarse behaviour for comic ends was unusual. Among the rare exceptions are some mezzotints engraved by Richard Earlom, significantly after Heemskerk, which return to the scatological world of the drolls. One example shows ugly card players, one of whom is urinating (pl.46).[40]

As the fashion for the fancies declined engravers became more faithful to their Dutch originals, but, when reproducing low genre, did so in a way very different from that popular a century earlier. Typical is Greenwood's 1768 The Social Friends (pl.47), an alehouse scene after Teniers. While late seventeenth-century engravers would have focussed on the figures and their base actions, Greenwood, who was trained in Holland,[41] emphasises the surroundings and still-life and uses a far more refined style. The figures are drinking and smoking, but without giving offence, and the title offers a gently ironical rather than bitingly satirical comment on their behaviour. Throughout the later eighteenth century Ostade's positive images of peasant life were among the most popular subjects for

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[40] Published by Boydell in 1768, see the example in the B.M.. Another engraver to reproduce a work by Heemskerk (untitled, exhibited at the Free Society in 1772) in this period was Butler Clowes, who, significantly, usually engraved the farcical genre scenes of John Collet.

[41] See White et al, Rembrandt, p.58.

engraving,[42] and they continued to be favoured in the compendiums of prints published early in the next century. Forster's volume featured Ostade's 'Flemish Family' (pl.48) and a cottage door scene by Isaack van Ostade entitled 'A Flemish Cottage', which is described as 'a close home scene' (pl.49).[43] The former picture reappeared in Tresham and Ottley's volume, with a text reassuring us that the peasants are only relaxing in-between bouts of hard work: 'the cottage fire-side, the country fair, or the festivity of a village wedding, furnished him with materials for pictures which, as they represented busy man in his moments of happiness, were on that account alone, well calculated to please'.[44]

Character and Expression

Low genre subjects might also be redeemed if they could be shown to embody some of the qualities associated with higher genres. We have already seen how low genre paintings in this period were praised for the 'humour' of their rustic characters. Such praise might be taken further to suggest that in his portrayal of character the low genre painter had shown something of the quality of mind which had hitherto been seen as separating history from genre. This possibility again owed something to Hogarth, whose pictures were valued for their depiction of character.[45] According to Repton, Ostade infuses his characters with 'a degree of intelligence and expression of thought, which, though it does not raise his subjects above nature (as in the Italian School) yet it does not sink it below (as in the

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[42] E.g. John Dixon's mezzotint The Peasant Family and the amateur Booth Grey's etching The Travelling Vendor, both of which show scenes of tranquil life around cottage doors (both Y.C.B.A.).

[43] British Gallery of Engravings, nos. 5, 24.

[44] British Gallery of Pictures, n.p..

[45] While Reynolds had earlier praised the depiction of character in Dutch genre, he had not devoted much attention to this quality (Discourse III, Discourse VI, see above, pp.101, 106).

Dutch School)'. Repton thinks such expression a higher quality than finishing and fidelity, a point he illustrates through another picture of a lawyer in the Stafford collection (pl.50):

> The earnest attention of the lawyer, and the doubt and anxious suspense of the client, so forcibly attract our notice, that the exquisite finish of the detail becomes a secondary consideration. In the pictures of Gerard Dow and Mieris, and others, we are often led to admire the carpets and utensils, while we regret the want of mind in the principle figures.[46]

Even the Academicians admired Ostade's accurate depiction of character. Fuseli, for example, thought it one of the qualities which allowed him to raise 'flowers from a dunghill', inspiring us 'to dive with him into the habitations of filth' and 'dwell on the loathsome inmates and contents'.[47]

Sale catalogues yield many instances of more indiscriminate praise for the depiction of character in low genre. It was an attractively vague mode of praise, ascribing a quality associated with history to genre without directly challenging the hierarchy. Typical is a description of a picture by Teniers of bowls players: 'the character and expression of the figures speak fully the power of that celebrated artist'.[48] Entire narratives were at times extrapolated from pictures in a manner perhaps learnt from British genre painters, who left physiognomic and emblematic clues to explain their subjects. An example is this account of an Ostade tavern scene:

> A good Story seems to retard the draught of him who possesses the liquor, whilst the mixture of attention and indifference in the Smoker, indicate that the Story is not quite so new as the relater imagines. The middle Figure, in a red cap, is preparing a Reply, and only waits the reluming of his Pipe to throw in a

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[46] 'Observations', pp.145-6. Earlier, 'Francis Fitzgerald' [Charles Taylor] had used prints of Dutch boors to illustrate 'character' in his The Artist's Repository and Drawing Magazine I (1784), 1796, pls. CXII, CXIV.

[47] Pilkington's Dictionary (1805), pp.374-5. For Phillips' less qualified admiration for Ostade's depiction of character, see Lectures, p.174. For the importance of character in Fuseli's Dramatic mode see Barrell, Political Theory, pp.283-96.

[48] Sale of Robert Heathcote, 5 April 1805 (Phillips), lot 34.

Satirical Remark on the Tale, or to give one, to his mind, much better.[49]

Through this sort of ekphrasis a droll might be rendered 'humorous' and interest added to works whose subjects seemed otherwise inscrutable.

Biography and Autobiography

At a time when all that was known about most artists was encapsulated in Pilkington or Bryan people tended to take what they read there seriously. One writer claimed that Dutch painters, 'accustomed to visit taverns and workshops, acquired their lowly style from the frequency of those mean and grotesque figures they had constantly before their eyes'.[50] In most cases painters' biographies and works tended to reinforce one another, so that, for example, the 'scenes of low debauchery' painted by Brouwer were held to reflect his life.[51] Anecdotes from painters' lives continued to be used to explain their pictures, as when Ottley, condemning Craesbeck's addiction to painting wounds, followed Pilkington in relating how he tested his wife by painting a mortal wound on his chest.[52] In an extension of this confusion between life and art painters were often said to have depicted themselves in their works, the most common example, then as now, being Steen. One entry describes 'Steen and his Wife taking an Afternoon Nap, after indulging rather freely in the dainties of the Table; their Children playing Tricks'.[53] The claim that the artist or his family was portrayed was also used to reinforce more positive genre images. A work by Dou, for example, is said to show his 'Mother in domestic employment'.[54] This tactic, long applied to the works of Rembrandt,[55]

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[49] Hart Davis sale, 1 June 1814 (Peter Coxe & Co.), lot 18. There are many examples in Cunningham's Cabinet Gallery.

[50] Cabinet of the Arts, pp.131-2.

[51] Jameson, Handbook, p.452.

[52] Engravings III, p.89.

[53] George Watson Taylor sale, Christie's, 13 June 1823, lot 52.

[54] Anon. sale, Christie's, 13 June 1807.

underlined the claim that the picture was a true record of industrious domesticity by identifying the figures involved. A sophisticated variant on this theme acknowledged the link between the painter and his subjects but simultaneously distanced him from them and established his social superiority to them. According to one catalogue a picture by Dusart depicts 'the Cottage Retreat of A. OSTADE, who is standing at the door: a Man is offering Fish to his Wife'.[56] The entry presents the Ostades as a model of domestic rustic contentment, while at the same time distancing Ostade from the world he portrays through the word 'retreat', which suggests that, like a number of cultured Englishman in the early nineteenth century, he was a town dweller who merely retreated to his country cottage.

This tactic of distancing was used most consistently with Teniers, whose gentle life-style and place at the court of Archduke Leopold were often mentioned.[57] Any well-dressed figures portrayed in his kermisses tend to be called 'Teniers and his family'.[58] Similarly, any large house in the background of his works is always 'Teniers' chateau',[59] and the artist himself is often identified talking to his gardeners. The image presented is that of a member of the gentry who not only oversees his estate but also paints it. Awareness of Teniers' relationship to his peasant subjects sets them in a pre-existing social structure which frames and defuses any transgressive behaviour in which they indulge. Jameson, contrasting him with Steen, wrote that Teniers 'always conveys to you an impression of his own superiority to the sort of life he represents, he

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55 For a contemporary example see the picture of 'Rembrandt's Cook' in Lord Radstock's sale, 12 May 1826 (Christie's), lot 14.

56 Sale of a Nobleman, 30 June 1830 (Phillips), lot 148.

57 See e.g. Smith, Catalogue III, p.250.

58 Ibid., p.334.

59 See e.g. Bryan sale, 17 May 1798, lot 42.

imparts to you the same feeling - that of an amused spectator of the rustic revels, not a partaker in the feast'.[60]

So important was the biographical quotient in the response to Dutch genre that by the 1830s advocates of Dutch art were seeking to exonerate painters who had traditionally received unflattering biographies. Nieuwenhuys' account of Steen is largely devoted to dismissing the scabrous anecdotes about the artist. He ends by questioning the validity of comparing a painter's life and his work, admitting that Steen at times included his own likeness but stating that 'it would be quite ridiculous to follow the example of some individuals, and presume that by so doing he intended to portray manners expressive of his personal and domestic life'.[61] By 1842 it was even being implied that Steen painted the excesses seen in his kermisses only to condemn them:

> to the left, an aged sinner - the shame of his village...unable to find his way home alone, from excess of indulgence in his favourite propensity, is conducted thither by his wife and daughter. The two youthful figures appear to express their disgust at his appearance, and proclaim the sow which follows to be his prototype.[62]

Self-portraiture

The identification of self-portraits in Dutch genre chimed with the Academic belief that the Dutch could only paint themselves. In Opie's words, 'Gods, emperors, heroes, sages and beauties, were all taken out of the same pot, and metamorphosised by one stroke of the pencil into Dutchmen.'[63] By the end of the century, however, reasons were being found to praise the parochialism of Dutch art. To judge from works like the

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60 Companion, p.92.
61 Review, pp.229-32.
62 Arataria, Descriptive Catalogue of the Gallery of Higginson, p.6.
63 Lectures, p.123.

Ostades' 'Flemish Family' and 'Flemish Cottage' in Forster's British Gallery, the words 'Dutch' and 'Flemish' used in titles after 1800 connoted a world of rustic contentment and domestic harmony, of peasants who were poor enough to be picturesque but who were happy with their lot. Dayes claimed that 'what makes the little rural representations of the Dutch school delight, is, in a great measure, their locality, and the ideas of primitive simplicity and happiness we connect thereto'.[64] Catalogues stressed the accuracy with which Dutch artists depicted their countrymen. An inn scene by Ostade, for example, is said to 'happily' describe 'the characteristic humour of the Boors of Holland'.[65]

This development was important for two reasons. In the first place, it set the picture in a foreign land. Across this aesthetic distance the behaviour of Dutch peasants, however transgressive, might be perceived as a picturesque spectacle, rather than as something repulsive. This strategy allowed low genre to be enjoyed without ignoring the subject and rising to the rarified formalism which Smith demanded of his connoisseurs. It was contingent upon a new attitude of disparaging condescension towards the Dutch themselves. By the late eighteenth century the United Provinces were of decreasing importance in international and mercantile affairs[66] and of increasing importance as a tourist venue. British satirists no longer portrayed them as threatening republican boors and sailors but as large-bottomed pipe-smokers, phlegmatic to the point of torpor, living in a picturesque land of windmills. Dutch inertia was celebrated as early as

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64 Works, p.326.

65 Sale of Edward Coxe, 25 April 1807, lot 65.

66 Barry was, to my knowledge, unique among art theorists in continuing to find the mercantile side of the Dutch important, arguing that they 'have deviated widely from all the sources of elegance, pathos, and sublimity' thanks to 'that sordid disposition, which will ever be epidemic in a country so generally devoted to gain' ('Lectures', in Works I, p.376).

1770 in a mezzotint by R. Brookshaw entitled The Contented Dutchmen (pl.51), which shows Dutch boors above this inscription:

> Let Heroes contend for the Laurel wreath'd prize,
> And Vie for the trophies of fame,
> These rustics their thoughts of amibition despise,
> Nor e'er to their honours lay claim.

In 1795 Isaac Cruikshank showed the Dutch resorting to the low genre practices of smoking, drinking and gambling while the French invade (pl.52).[67]

In the second place, genre paintings began to attract an ethnographic interest as records of the costumes and amusements of the seventeenth-century Dutch. In an 1833 catalogue an unattributed genre painting is described as:

> an interior, descriptive of one of the polite domestic customs of the seventeenth century...Subjects treated with that local fidelity which characterises this subject, excite the most pleasurable associations, as they open to us...the living page of life in the days of our forefathers.[68]

Such aspects were of growing interest in the nineteenth century, when what made peoples and periods differ from one another began to seem more interesting than the more typically eighteenth-century concern with what men held in common.[69] As the above remark suggests, it was not only the everyday activities of people from different countries but also those of

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[67] B.M. Satires, no.8633. See Duffy, Englishman and Foreigner, p.30.

[68] Sale of pictures from Exeter Hall, 14 March 1833, lot 53. Similarly, a picture by Lingelbach was called 'admirably characteristic of Italian Manners' (Christie's, 26 Jan. 1811, lot 35).

[69] Ethnographic interest was not only taken in the Low Countries. In the 1820s Charles Eastlake occupied himself in Italy and Greece sketching peasants rather than antiquities (New Monthly Magazine 1825 ii, XV, pp.107-8). By 1870 F. P. Seguier was recommending the works of the youngest Heemskerk to those 'curious in collecting local pictures of the habits and dress of the working-classes about a hundred and forty years ago' (Critical and Commercial Dictionary of the Works of Painters, London, 1870, p.90).

the past which now seemed fascinating,[70] although the implication given in this entry that Dutch genre might be consulted as a record of how the English themselves had once been was more unusual.

While depictions of contented Dutch peasants were seen as an acceptable way of depicting the peasantry, English commentators did not preempt Theophile Thoré in seeing Dutch parochialism as a repository of positive moral value. The early nineteenth century view that the source of morality lay at home, while the wider world stood for corruption, a reversal of Shaftesbury's belief that true morality stemmed from a distant view of the world, tended to surface only when commentators were discussing the genre paintings of their own country. Thus, while the Dutchman Christian Josi claimed that Dutch art was superior to that of Italy precisely because it portrayed the moral and upstanding Dutch people,[71] British writers, as will be seen in Chapter Ten, confined such nationalistic claims to British genre paintings.

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[70] E.g. Joseph Strutt's A Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England, London, 1796-9.

[71] Preface to C. Ploos van Amstel, Collection d'imitations de dessins d'après les principaux maîtres Hollandois et Flamands, London, 1821, p.xii.

Chapter X

British Genre and the Heritage of Dutch Art

The Problem: Truth and Decorum

The same factors which led critics to seek positive values in the subjects of Dutch genre also led them to demand more positive images of the rural poor from English genre painters.[1] This chapter examines how contemporaries perceived the attempts of English genre painters to reconcile the demand for more positive images with the difficult heritage of Dutch genre. That this heritage still dominated ideas of genre is suggested by a comment made by Dawe, who, writing at a time when English artists had already been trying to offer positive images of the peasantry for several decades, was still wishing that painters:

> would oftener employ their talents upon the more refined parts of nature. There appears no reason why an impressive exhibition of the virtues and happiness of rural life should not, if pourtrayed with the same ability, be made as interesting as the vulgar and coarse manners of the lowest part of society.[2]

One problem facing English painters trying to offer positive images of the poor was the old belief that depictions of the lower orders were necessarily comic. This problem had been eased in part by the growing belief that humour should lie in incongruity rather than unavoidable misfortune, with the result that in late eighteenth-century English art the comic became, with a few exceptions like the amateur John Collett, the

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1 See Barrell, Dark Side, passim.
2 Life, p.184.

preserve of caricaturists, whose humour rested on an admitted distortion of reality. The caricaturists, who, unlike genre painters, usually depicted an urban milieu, appropriated the role of portraying transgression once taken by the drolls.[3] This made it easier for genre painters to claim their works as serious, but only if they could also convice spectators that they were true to nature. Their works therefore had to be believable, but without descending to an ugliness and squalor which would return them to the set of the comic drolls. The need for decorum was especially pressing given that one of the main reasons for producing genre paintings at this time was to act as designs for prints which were aimed at middle-class purchasers.[4] The resulting images had to be inoffensive enough to fulfil a decorative role in the bourgeois interior.[5]

The solution chosen by artists like Bigg and Wheatley in the 1780s lay in a blend of inherited traditions. Following Hogarth and Greuze they used captioned prints and series of images to convey an unequivocal morality: good behaviour is rewarded, bad behaviour punished.[6] The narrative possibilities of the genre raised by Hogarth and Greuze are, however, ignored: the intention is to show a reassuringly static social situation and consequently character and anecdote are kept to a minimum. For their figures English painters looked to the ideal of working class prettiness offered by Mercier and his followers. The level of prettiness, however, had to be carefully gauged so that it did not seem at odds with truth to

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[3] They even adapted some of the subjects of the drolls, see e.g. a confessional scene printed in 1794 (B.M. Satires, no.8585).

[4] See E. D. H. Johnson, Social Scene, pp.80-3, 129.

[5] Reviews often refer to genre prints by such appellations as 'pretty furniture prints' (e.g. Monthly Magazine XIX, 1805, p.168). For a complaint about the artistic mediocrity resulting from pandering to the increasingly wealthy print-buying bourgeoisie see London Magazine ii III, 1825, p.49.

[6] See E. D. H. Johnson, Social Scene, pp.83-101.

nature: journal criticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reveals an abiding tension between the desire for naturalism and the demand for decorum. Typical is this praise for prints after Thomas Stothard's Maternal Enjoyment and Benevolant Tars, to which his Tenant's Family (pl.53), painted two years earlier, is very similar:

> Many of our artists who design little rustic subjects, seem to have contemplated the fluttering flourishes of the old French school, or the fantastic fan-paintings of the imitators of Watteau and Lancret, rather than nature, which in this eccentric wandering after the prettinesses of the art seems to be very little attended to. The painter of these two little fascinating subjects has adopted a very different conduct...They are distinguished by simplicity and taste, and marked with nature, with English nature.[7]

Very rapidly, however, designs of this sort seemed artificial.[8] Year by year the criteria for accepting a genre image as true became more rigorous. The suggestion that English peasants were especially worthy of portrayal, embodying unique moral or visual qualities, also grew in importance. Like the similar opinions voiced by Josi about the Dutch, this belief was underwritten by nationalism and by the notion that morality should be sought at home. In 1817 Craig justified concentrating on 'British scenes' when discussing genre by arguing that only 'in this highly-favoured land' may we find 'happy and independent rustics'.[9] In the same year the public was reassured that the models of rustic figures sold at Ackermann's shop to help budding genre painters were 'selected from the English peasantry'.[10]

Ironically, given the value placed on faithful depictions of English peasants, it was to Dutch art that English painters turned for a language bearing the imprimatur of truth. This move, which rested on the belief that

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[7] Monthly Magazine XV, 1803, p.564. Cf. ibid. XX, 1805, p.52 (praising George Morland).

[8] See below, pp.209-10.

[9] 'To the Reader', in Lairesse, Treatise, p.288.

[10] W. H. Pyne, Rustic Figures, London, 1817, p.ii.

Dutch art was, if nothing else, true to nature, also owed something to the tendency of the Picturesque movement to use it as a glass though which to discern aesthetic qualities in the English countryside.[11] As early as 1767 Viscount Torrington hired Stubbs to paint his labourers after deciding that they looked 'like a Flemish subject'.[12] It was, however, to the settings, not the figures, of Dutch genre that English artists looked. While Mercier and his followers often placed their figures in vestigial settings, artists in the 1780s and 90s like Bigg, James Ward, Richard Westall and Henry Singleton paid increasing attention to the rustic surroundings of their characters. If Mercier encouraged the viewer to see his figures as creatures of the imagination, painted for his private delight, the more elaborate settings used by the later painters represent a claim that the scene portrayed is at least potentially true, taking place within a defined space in the real world. To this end details used by Dutch genre painters, especially the Ostades, such as the vine over the door, the bird cage and the offscape with a church tower are common (pls.54, 55). Other Dutch artists are also evoked: the baskets of peas in Bigg's 1782 Cottage Girl Shelling Peas, for example, look back to W. van Mieris (pls.56, 38). In each case the motif is anglicised; the church towers, for example, are of an English type; but the prototype is unmistakeably Dutch. The most popular genre setting of the age, the cottage door, was borrowed from the images of peasant domesticity painted by the Ostades and their followers. For English artists the cottage door allowed a combination of signs of honest labour with a setting connoting domesticity and repose.[13]

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[11] Knight felt Dutch landscapists had treated scenes similar to those found in England (The Landscape, p.45).

[12] Ozias Humphry's biographical notes on Stubbs, cit. E. D. H. Johnson, Social Scene, p.125.

[13] For the rustic cottage as a symbol of rest and retirement in this period see e.g. Knight, Analytical Inquiry, p.64; M. Pointon, 'Gainsborough and the Landscape of Retirement', Art History II, 1979, pp.441-55.

Like dealers and collectors, however, painters had to cope with the associations of Dutch low genre with transgression. One critic praised the 'unaffected simplicity' of William Owen's Girl Washing Her Feet (pl.58), but found such subjects as girls putting on their stockings 'not altogether ...pleasing',[14] surely because they reminded him of the more openly erotic Dutch subject of women taking off their stockings. It was to avoid such echoes that English genre painters observed certain conventions which distance their work from its Dutch antecedents. Prior to 1806 the close following of Dutch models was rare. Among the few exceptions were some of the pictures of John Cranch, including one of carousing monks for which the source may have been Heemskerk (pl.59), and the paintings of servants produced by John Atkinson around 1770 (pl.60), which in their compositions and attention to still-life look to the works of the later fijnschilders.[15]

The most important tactic used to distance English genre from Dutch genre was the portrayal of clean, elegant figures, who were at times taken as representative of the health and contentment of English peasants.[16] One catalogue praised the elegance of Gainsborough's Peasant Girl with Dish of Milk,[17] and the Duchess of Devonshire was said to have been the model for another of his genre figures (pl.61).[18] Turner claimed that Gainsborough had 'rais'd the beauties' of Dutch art by avoiding its 'defects, the mean vulgarisms of common low life and disgusting incidents of common nature'.[19] Some, however, found his confections artificial when compared to the work

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14 Review of the Publications of Art I, 1808, p.116.

15 For what little is known of Atkinson see Waterhouse, Dictionary of British 18th Century Painters, p.34.

16 See e.g. The Repository of Arts VII, 1812 on the genre watercolours of Joshua Cristall and Thomas Uwins.

17 Now Castle Howard. Sale of Willett (Coxe, 1 June 1813, lot 88).

18 See J. Hayes, The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, London, 1982, II, p.479.

19 Ziff, 'Backgrounds', p.146.

of artists like Morland,[20] showing the fine balance which had to be found between truth and decorum. Pasquin, similarly, objected to Wheatley's over-dressed 'village Daphnes', made 'prodigiously fine at the expence of truth'.[21] Other artists settled for making their figures respectable and clean, but by 1805 even this seemed artificial, one critic describing a cottager by Morland as 'too young and too smart'.[22] As late as 1817 Craig warned painters against 'the common practice' of painting rustics 'with what is called a pretty face. That is, large eyes, red simpering lips, red cheeks, and a Grecian nose' (cf. pl.53).[23]

While the high colour key favoured by some English genre painters, notably Wheatley, and their relatively broad brushwork cannot be attributed to the desire to distance English genre from Dutch genre alone, they did allow English painters to avoid the subdued colours and minutely finished settings which contributed to the image of rustic squalor conveyed by Dutch low genre. The same desire to convey a clean and unsullied picture of rustic life led English genre painters to be sparing in their inclusion of parerga. In contrast to the clutter of Dutch low genre scenes, Morland, Wheatley and Bigg tend to portray only a few token objects: a bird-cage, a broom, a few clean pots and pans to show the industry of the cottagers. There was another reason for this economy. Domestic objects had, by tradition, been seen as the signs of humour in painting. This notion went back to the association of comedy with everyday life: domestic objects placed the scene in a particular time and place, denying it the chance to attain a wider significance. Several writers warned history painters

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[20] Dawe, Life, p.183. For other examples see Hayes, Landscape Paintings II, pp.479-80, p.555.

[21] Memoirs of the Royal Academicians, pp.31-2.

[22] Monthly Magazine XIX, 1805, p.168.

[23] 'To the Readers', in Lairesse, Treatise II, p.288.

against the bathetic effects of including domestic utensils.[24] Walpole emphasised Hogarth's comic use of furniture.[25] The paucity of utensils in English genre at this time is in contrast to the works of Greuze in France, where Dutch genre was less closely linked to the comic.[26]

Another aspect of the bowdlerisation of Dutch models in English genre was the preference for the cottage door, relatively unusual in Dutch art,[27] to the cottage interior. Interiors are relatively uncommon in English low genre before the rise of Wilkie. As the setting of the more squalid episodes in Dutch genre, the rustic interior was fraught with bad associations. Where Dutch low genre interiors had furnished models for English painters they had usually been used in scenes of unhappy poverty or comedy. An example of the former is Hogarth's Distressed Poet, in which the chimney, littered floor and leaded window recall Ostade (pl.63, cf. pl.44). Examples of the latter include Sandby's illustration of Allan Ramsey Sr's 'pastoral comedy' The Gentle Shepherd, in which the inn scene with a table at the front and another at the back owes something to Heemskerk,(pl.64, cf. pl.11) and Zoffany's depiction of Garrick in The Farmer's Return, in which the rustic interior owes a less specific debt to Dutch genre (pl.65 is a studio copy: the original is now in the collection of Lord Lambton). Cottage interiors, when portrayed, answered to a strict decorum. In Wheatley's Night, the only one of his Rustic Hours set indoors, the furniture and utensils are minimised so as not to disrupt the interior with comical squalor (pl.66). Any potential for transgressive behaviour is defused by the fact that the husband has fallen asleep over his supper.

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[24] E.g. Richardson, Discourses, p.82; Lairesse, Art of Painting, p.68; Reynolds, in Northcote, Life II, p.59.

[25] Anecdotes IV, p.72.

[26] See Brookner, Greuze, p.44.

[27] See Masters of Dutch Seventeenth-century Genre Painting, p.291.

Morland and Picturesque Naturalism

The use made of the Dutch genre tradition by English painters in the later eighteenth century was, therefore, limited. In the 1790s, however, some English painters, influenced by the fashion for the Picturesque, began to introduce ragged clothes, a more detailed attention to domestic utensils and a more muted and harmonious colour scheme. The move had been presaged by Uvedale Price's friend Gainsborough, who deployed tattered garments and broken utensils in the fancy pictures and cottage door scenes he began to paint in the 1770s.[28] The heap of cabbages and vessels seen in the 1778 Cottage Door is a common motif in Dutch genre (pl.67),[29] and the Huntington Cottage Door seems to be indebted, in the doorway and its surrounds, to pictures by Isaack van Ostade (pls.61, 62). Gainsborough, however, frames his quotations from Dutch genre with figures and landscapes which owed little to Dutch art. While Gainsborough stood outside the main genre tradition of the day, by the 1790s other English genre painters were also beginning to respond to the Picturesque. One example is Bigg's 1803 The Inside of a Cottage, Lexden, Essex; the Old Woman's Return from the Village (pl.68), which includes carefully imitated utensils and in which attention

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[28] Gainsborough's debt to Ruisdael and Hobbema in his landscapes of the 1740s and 50s is well-known. English landscape painters had preceded English genre painters in following Dutch models closely, see The Shock of Recognition, Arts Council exhib. cat., 1971, passim. By the 1780s several artists were copying and faking Dutch landscapes (for George Morland see William Collins, Memoirs of...the Late George Morland, London, 1806, pp.11, 14; for Philip Reinagle, Frank Howard, 'Memoir of Henry Howard', in Howard, Lectures, London 1848, p.iv; for Ibbetson's confession that he forged works by Ostade and Teniers see Clay, Ibbetson, pp.134, 139). Landscape painters occasionally quoted details from Dutch genre, an early example being Wilson's The Cock Tavern, Cheam Common (c.1746), in which the tavern, as David Solkin has noted, echoes pictures by Isaack van Ostade (Richard Wilson: the Landscape of Reaction, Tate Gallery exhib. cat., 1982, p.32).

[29] Cf. the 1788 version, now University of California at Los Angeles.

is paid to a variety of rough textures.[30] The point of the picture seems to have been visual interest rather than any moral statement. This development also chimed with the call for greater naturalism; it is significant that many of the earliest examples, as in this case, are found in pictures which claim to be portrayals of actual interiors.[31] This development, however, also coincided with a widening in the range of permissable subject matter, and a few alehouse interiors begin to be seen (pl.69). A growing interest in Picturesque qualities thus tended to bring English genre closer to its Dutch antecedents in both subject and style.

Even the Picturesque, however, did not give the genre painter license to abandon the decorum controlling pictures of the lower classes, as may be seen from the case of George Morland. Morland's subjects evolved around 1790 from genteel moral genre in the manner of Wheatley to scenes featuring peasants in ragged garments in Picturesque settings. It was as a result of the latter that Morland was placed in the set of Dutch art by his posthumous biographers. The importance of Dutch painting in his education was stressed and Morland was dubbed 'the English Teniers', even though the two painters shared little beyond a liking for rustic subjects. Comments on Morland's work, which feature praise for his colour and faithful imitation of nature, echo contemporary remarks on Dutch low genre.[32] He

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[30] Cf. his A Cottage Interior of 1793 (Victoria and Albert Museum, repr. K. M. Heleniak, William Mulready, New Haven and London, 1980, p.78.

[31] Cf. Beaumont's 1800 Elizabeth Woods (ill. Owen & Brown, Collector of Genius, p.104); and Turner's 1796 watercolour, Internal of a Cottage, a Study at Ely, with its very Dutch assembly of utensils (ill. in Gage, J. M. W. Turner: 'A Wonderful Range of Mind', New Haven & London, 1987, p.103). For much earlier examples not intended for public exhibition see Paul Sandby's watercolours of kitchens, now in the Royal Collection at Windsor, two of which are reproduced in Weatherill, Consu mer Behaviour, pp.141, 148.

[32] For colour see Collins Sr, Memoirs, p.118, 192; for truth to nature Dawe, who claimed that 'from the works of Morland the philosopher may in part study the manners of humble life' (Life, p.179, p.183).

was, however, admired for not following the Dutch in everything, for aping Dutch chiaroscuro, for example, but not the inferior quality of minute finish.[33] He was also praised for avoiding 'the gross and disgusting impurities of the Dutch school'.[34] Collins denied the comparison with Teniers, because Teniers' figures were ill-proportioned while those of Morland were elegant, and Teniers often depicted 'brutish situations' while Morland never offends 'decency'.[35]

Morland was, therefore, seen as making an exemplary response to the genre painting tradition. Given this perception, I am unable to follow Barrell in finding subversive elements in his pictures.[36] Morland's works of the 1790s, on which Barrell focusses and of which Higglers Preparing for Market (pl.70) is typical, do not display the pristine settings and hard-working, prettified peasants of Singleton, Westall and Wheatley, but they go no further than those of Bigg, Ibbetson and Ward in admitting a degree of picturesque roughness (see e.g. pl.69). As Barrell admits, Morland's contemporaries especially valued the picturesque qualities of his scenes.[37] His biographers question very few of the subjects of the many paintings they discuss, and even then the criticism is usually levelled not at the artist but at the lower class actors he accurately portrays, as in the children Collins accuses of stealing fruit.[38] In only three cases do the biographers attack Morland for choosing improperly low subjects.[39] Barrell is, however, right that it is significant that such criticism was made at

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33 Dawe, Life, p.11; Collins Sr, Memoirs, pp.199-201; John Hassell, Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Morland, London, 1806, p.100.

34 Hassell, Memoirs, p.57.

35 Memoirs, p.180. Cf. Dawe, Life. p.181; Hassell, Memoirs, p.57.

36 Dark Side, pp.100-29.

37 Ibid., pp.104-5.

38 Cf. the English 'sons of liberty' Collins Sr accuses of drinking 'in spite of all opposition' (Memoirs, pp.232, 234).

39 Collins Sr, Memoirs, p.234; Hassell, Memoirs, pp.154, 163.

all. The fact that it was directed at Morland and not at contemporaries working in a similar style is, I think, attributable to two factors. The first is Morland's failure to leave clues as to how to read his works, which generally lack any clear moral meaning. This was not damning in itself, until combined with knowledge of Morland's personal history. Unlike Teniers, the friend of Archdukes and lord of the manor, Morland, as his biographers recounted, lived a dissolute and ruinous life, frequenting alehouses and shunning the correct channels of patronage. Collins' occasional attacks on the drinking in Morland's pictures are as symptomatic of his desire to make Morland's life a morality tale about the evils of drink as they are a response to the pictures themselves. Similarly, his description of Morland's Market Cart as looking 'like a return to spend the evening at some knowing ale-house in the neighbourhood of St. Giles's' reads like his account of Morland's life.[40]

According to Dawe, if Morland's art does not reflect his life, it is only because of the good taste of the public, working through the market:

> Teniers, who is described as a man of elegant manners and refined mind, has represented in his pictures indelicacies which Morland, though he delighted in them, has avoided. Each artist was actuated by the desire of selling his works, but those vulgar exhibitions which, in the time and country of the one, were considered as wit, and elevated mirth, in those of the other would have produced only disgust.

This suggests that the problem was not that Morland's pictures resembled the more nefarious sort of Dutch low genre but that his life did. Several writers pointed out the resemblance of Morland's life to that of Brouwer.[41] It was this which led Morland's biographers to direct some of

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[40] Collins Sr, Memoirs, pp.233, 234.

[41] Dawe, Life, pp.182, 176; cf. Collins Sr, Memoirs, p.181. Lives of Brouwer may have influenced Dawe's biography: his report that Morland declared for 'a short life and a merry one' (ibid., p.142) duplicates a remark which Graham attributes to Brouwer ('Short Account', p.338).

the same criticisms at him which were also directed at Dutch art. Dawe, for example, argues that Morland's life gave him a special insight into the manners of the lower classes but also, through his ignorance of past art, left him, like the Dutch, dependent on the literal imitation of what he saw and unable to choose 'the higher beauties' of his subjects.[42] The flip-side of praising Morland for his truth to nature was thus the concern that he had not kept a proper distance from his subjects. Presumably if he had followed Wheatley in prettifying his subjects, rather than adopting a style then seen as the epitome of naturalism, this accusation could not have been made and knowledge of his life would not have so coloured responses to his art. It was, surely, this consideration which prompted Dawe to call for more unequivocally positive images of peasants.

The Wilkie Revolution

Responses to Morland show how risqué low genre material could be in this period, the extent to which its painters were required not only to follow a strict decorum in their work but also in their lives. Even at the time they were writing, however, Morland's biographers were being answered by a painter whose depictions of the peasantry were often considerably less positive than those of Wheatley but who nevertheless won respectability for low genre by emphasising the distance between the artist and his subjects. If the comparison between Morland and Teniers rested on the similarities of their subject matter, David Wilkie, after arriving in London in 1805, modelled his handling, colour and composition self-consciously on that of the Flemish painter. In his first Royal Academy picture, the 1806 Village Politicians (pl.71), Wilkie used several devices familiar from Teniers'

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[42] Dawe, Life, pp.176, 204-5.

interiors (pl.72), including a planimetric composition, the deployment of one group of figures in the left foreground and another in the right background, and a still-life of utensils to show his mimetic skill. Wilkie also used sombre colours and gave an approximation of Teniers' minute finishing. Over the next five years he continued to paint interiors inspired by Teniers, largely ignoring the cottage doors favoured by the previous generation of British genre painters. He was rapidly and, given his ancestry, inaccurately styled 'the English Teniers', and within a short time no-one remembered that Morland had once borne the same title. Wilkie later progressed to a style which, in its deeper compositions and browner colouring, looked to Ostade, and also used Terborch and De Hooch as models.[43] Wilkie's debts to Dutch genre have been discussed elsewhere.[44] What matters here is how his contemporaries saw the relationship between his pictures and their Dutch models.

By following Dutch models so closely, Wilkie was paradoxically asserting his distance from the low subjects which he and the Dutch shared, proclaiming the self-consciousness, atavism and artificiality of his low genre painting. While Morland was seen as the literal imitator of a nature unmediated by reference to artistic tradition, Wilkie was rumoured to have painted his second Academy picture, The Blind Fiddler, with a Teniers by

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[43] See respectively Blind Man's Buff (1812; Royal Collection); The Letter of Introduction (1813; National Gallery of Scotland); The Errand Boy (1818; Lord Glenconnor).

[44] See L. Errington, 'The Genre Paintings of Wilkie', in Sir David Wilkie of Scotland, North Carolina Museum of Art exhib. cat., 1987, pp.3-20; A. S. Marks, 'David Wilkie's Letter of Introduction', Burl. CX, 1968, p.130. Wilkie's early debt to prints by Ostade, perhaps via the engravings of David Deuchar (A Collection of Etchings after the Dutch and Flemish Schools, 1803) is also well-known.

his easel.[45] There was never any question about Wilkie's debt to past art. Westall, perhaps defending his own style of genre, claimed that the Village Politicians owed more to 'the study of pictures' than to that of nature.[46] The distance thus established between the subjects of Wilkie's pictures and their executant was reinforced by his public image as a respectable son of the manse who welcomed the patronage and advice of leading collectors. It was because of his lifestyle as well as his painting style that it was now Wilkie who was equated with Teniers, while Morland was increasingly equated with Brouwer.[47] This divorce between subject and artist was a crucial step in the establishment of low genre painting as a respectable enterprise. Wilkie was the first to show that a low genre painter could more effectively distance himself from his subjects through the witty pastiche of the tainted low genre tradition than through its coy bowdlerisation.

In various ways, however, Wilkie took care to show that he was not simply a pasticheur of Dutch art. His pictures tend to be larger than those by Teniers on which they are based, and his colouring, compositions and handling do not so much copy Dutch genre as give an impression of it.[48] His colour, for example, never achieves the cool harmonies of Teniers. While Wilkie's early settings owe much to Dutch genre, the title of the Village Politicians proclaimed its setting as Scotland[49] and one critic claimed to recognise the figures as imitations of Scottish peasants as

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[45] See Burnet, 'Wilkie', p.105. See also his construction of model interiors to observe the effects of light and shade, a device he believed had been used by Dutch painters (Whitley, Art in England, 1800-20, p.318).

[46] Farington, Diary VII, p.2716, 12 April 1806.

[47] The Examiner (IV, 1811, p.411) named Morland 'the British Breuwer'.

[48] The more perceptive critics recognised the difference at the time, e.g. Robert Hunt's contrast of Teniers' 'square' brushwork to that of Wilkie, Examiner V, 1812, p.283. The best analysis of Wilkie's technical debt to Dutch art remains that by Burnet, see 'Wilkie', pp.110-15.

[49] The Village Politicians, vide Scotland's Skaith (the latter part of the title refers to a balled written in 1795 by Hector Macneill).

faithful as those by Teniers of Flemish boors.[50] Wilkie moved on to settings which were recognisably British,[51] reinforcing the claim that his pictures were, for all their debt to Dutch art, true to nature. His biographers stressed the importance he attached to this aspect of his art. Burnet recalled him observing real peasants while other students copied the genre pictures of Westall and Morland.[52] Burnet may have remembering how rapidly Wilkie made the works of the previous generation of genre painters seem artificial. By 1808 a critic was accusing the cottagers of Westall, praised by another critic for their naturalism and Englishness in 1802, of looking as if they had emerged from an opera rather than the English countryside.[53] Wilkie thus changed the definition of naturalism in genre despite his explicit debt to Dutch art. That he was able to do so owed as much to the connotations of naturalism carried by the Dutch style as to his subtle divergences from it, connotations which his predecessors had feared to exploit too closely.

Wilkie's distance from the Dutch tradition was emphasised by critics, perhaps because his proximity to it forced them to define, at a time when the English school was still in its adolescence, wherein the Englishness of English art lay. Most agreed with Hazlitt in finding Teniers superior in 'truth and brilliant clearness of colouring' and 'facility of execution'.[54] This was often, however, a back-handed compliment, as these qualities were still seen by many as mechanical. The criticism was often balanced with

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50 Monthly Magazine XXI, 1806, p.451.

51 Cunningham regarded the setting of The Card Players (1808) as 'essentially English' (The Life of Sir David Wilkie, London 1843, I, p.168).

52 Burnet, 'Wilkie', p.108.

53 Review of the Publications of Art I, 1808, p.85; Monthly Magazine XIV, 1802, p.60. A later critic thought the scenes of Wheatley and Morland too generalised in comparison to those of Wilkie (Annals IV, 1819, p.30).

54 'On Mr. Wilkie's Pictures', The Champion, 5 March 1815, in Works, XVIII, pp.98-100. Cf. London Magazine ii III, 1825, p.62.

praise for Wilkie's excellence in the more elevated quality of the depiction of character, while the boors of Teniers 'are all equally sots and dolts'.[55] In the Village Politicians Wilkie used the language of the Dutch drolls to make the same point that the drolls had made: that the transgressive activities of the working classes, in this case political sedition, were ludicrous and therefore harmless. The clutter of utensils, the exaggerated expressions of the figures and the pastiche of the comical low genre style all reinforce the comic nature of the scene. Wilkie, however, had taken pains to express the character of his figures, and it was this aspect of his picture, rather than its humour, which most impressed its first spectators. Lord Mulgrave, for example, believed that 'Wilkie wd. go beyond Teniers, Ostade & all who had preceded Him, as He not only gave exquisitely the ordinary expressions of the human countenance but those of thought & abstraction'.[56] Wilkie took the hint and in his subsequent genre paintings such as the Rent Day (1807: private collection) character and narrative acquire an increasing importance.

Mulgrave's reference to abstraction suggests history painting rather than genre, and the standard procedure for differentiating Wilkie from the Dutch was to assert that his paintings manifested the qualities of mind traditionally sought in history painting. The genre painter Collins, for example, thought that Distraining for Rent had 'all the pathos of a Raphael', and showed Wilkie's 'fitness for the highest departments of

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[55] Annals IV, 1819, p.31. Among many other e.g.s see Examiner I, 1808, p.300; V, 1812, p.268; London Magazine i I, 1820, p.698.

[56] Farington, Diary, VIII, pp.2993-4, 24 March 1807. Cf. Beaumont in ibid., VII, p.2716, 12 April 1806; Haydon, Life, p.44. Wilkie's portrayal of character has received ample discussion, most notably by Errington, Tribute to Wilkie, National Gallery of Scotland exhib. cat., 1985, pp.26-52.

Art'.[57] The point was contested by Hazlitt, who saw Wilkie as merely a 'prosaic, literal narrator of facts' in whose works higher qualities were only vestigially present.[58] This sentiment was, however, less usual than that found in this anonymous letter:

> In painting, indeed, in the lucid richness of a floating touch, in clearness, freshness, purity and vigour of execution, Wilkie is so far inferior to Teniers. But, Sir, in the higher qualities, of mind and intellect, in conception of character, in pathos of expression, and strength of humour, Teniers is no more to be compared to Wilkie, than Paul Veronese to Raffaelle.[59]

The application to genre of language traditionally applied to history, seen much earlier in France in Diderot's writings on Greuze,[60] also manifested itself in the claim that Wilkie's paintings were moral, while those of the Dutch were merely descriptive.[61] Initially this morality was thought to be carried in the incidents represented, as when Wilkie used the traditional Dutch theme of the alehouse exterior for a sermon on 'the odious nature of drunkenness' in his Village Festival.[62] For later writers like Waagen, however, Wilkie's morality lay in his portrayal of 'the quiet, genial happiness...sometimes found in the narrow circle of domestic life', a quality which Waagen, prefiguring Jameson's remarks on Maes, thought comparable to that found in Scott.[63]

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[57] Memoirs I, p.199. For a later comparison of Wilkie with Raphael see Burnet, 'Wilkie', p.116.

[58] 'On Mr. Wilkie's Pictures', in Works XVIII, pp.99-100. For others unable to find qualities of 'mind' in Wilkie's works see the New Monthly Magazine i V, 1816, p.125; Cornelius van Vinckbooms [Thomas Wainewright] in the London Magazine i IV, 1821, p.71.

[59] Annals of the Fine Arts, II, 1818, pp.476-7.

[60] Brookner, Greuze, pp.62-5. Diderot also praised Greuze for the elegance of his scenes in comparison to those of Teniers, and his observance of decorum, two aspects of Wilkie's painting also stressed by English critics.

[61] See e.g. New Monthly Magazine, i III, 1815, p.113.

[62] Examiner V, 1812, p.282. See Wilkie's own comments on the 'Moral part' of the picture, Farington, Diary, vol.IX, p.3465, 22 May 1809. Cf. Cunningham on The Card Players, Life I, p.167.

[63] Art and Artists I, p.240.

The discovery of the qualities of history painting in English genre may also be seen as a response to the realisation that it was in genre, rather than history, that the English now excelled.[64] If some critics regretted that England was producing 'Douws and Denners', not Raphaels and Michelangelos,[65] others sought the qualities of history in English genre. A review of a sketch for Wilkie's Reading of the Will admitted that it contained no ideal forms or elevated characters, but claimed that:

> the whole effect charms the sight and interests the mind of the spectator; it conveys an intellectual delight; and Raphael could do no more. When the canvass represents an interesting story or subject, it is of secondary importance whether it be tragedy or comedy, terrible or pathetic, calculated to excite indignation or mirth; it is always an appeal to the understanding. The degree of its power is that of its particular merit; but there is very little inequality between the classes of such works. The preference given to them is arbitrary.

The author goes on to argue that all narrative painting is history, and that it is 'invidious' to divide history painting into higher and lower sorts.[66] Another critic, also praising British genre, contested the belief that 'great historical pictures only, afford a field for a genius of the highest class'.[67] Such comments, which became increasingly common, signal a decline, if not the demise, in belief in the supremacy of history painting. This decline, which also owed something to the growing perception that landscape was now one of the strengths of English art,[68] is reflected in the attempts to draw up new taxonomies for the arrangement of genres. Hunt proposed 'narrative painting' as a new category, including

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64 See above, p.128.

65 New Monthly Magazine i III, 1815, p.454. Some later critics continued to make the same complaint, see The Athenaeum I, 1828, p.172.

66 Magazine of the Fine Arts I, 1821, p.46. In 1812 Hunt listed genre pictures by Wilkie and Edward Bird under the heading of 'historical canvases' (Examiner V, p.521).

67 New Monthly Magazine ii XII, 1819, pp.466-9. Cf. Library of the Fine Arts ii I, 1833, p.50.

68 For attempts to discuss landscape in terms drawn from history see e.g. Turner, in Ziff, 'Backgrounds', p.133.

genre, to stand between history and landscape,[69] while Lady Callcott toyed with the idea of placing genre within Fuseli's category of Dramatic art.[70]

One of the aspects of Wilkie's art which differentiated it from that of the Dutch and enabled it to stand comparison with that of Raphael was the greater elegance of his figures and the absence of 'grossness and disgusting details'.[71] Hunt patriotically claimed that Wilkie's figures are superior to those in Dutch art because 'they are well-proportioned English', and argued that they were as carefully selected for their beauty as those in history painting.[72] Another critic contrasted his 'mind and soul' with the boors of Teniers, which looked as if they were 'sometimes painted from toads instead of men'.[73] Wilkie's Pitlessie Fair, painted while he was still living in Scotland, had however contained several scatological details of the sort familiar from Dutch genre, including a mother wiping a child. Cunningham disingenuously used his remarks on this picture to praise Wilkie for not stumbling 'into the dirty Dutch path to reputation', with the exception of 'one or two groups'.[74] After arriving in London Wilkie's work became more decorous, and he was thus able to bring humour back into genre, albeit the amiable humour of character rather than the low humour of transgression.[75] Amiable humour became so closely associated with genre in England that critics began to deny that, in

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69 Examiner VIII, 1815, p.365.
70 Essays, p.176.
71 Magazine of the Fine Arts I, 1821, p.46; cf. Annals V, 1820, p.332.
72 Examiner IV, 1811, p.315; VI, 1813, p.315.
73 London Magazine ii III, 1825, p.62, quoted by Hemingway, 'The Progress of Taste'.
74 Life I, p.63; cf. ibid., p.152, where Wilkie is said to have Teniers' 'glow' without his 'grossness'.
75 Critics drew a distinction between Wilkie's humour and Hogarth's caricature, see Annals IV, 1819, p.30; Waagen, Art and Artists I, p.240. According to Cunningham, Wilkie's humour was imbued with moral dignity, while Steen was content to raise a laugh (Cabinet Gallery II, p.150).

comparison, the Dutch painters of transgressive humour were funny at all.[76] So successful was Wilkie in returning humour to genre that, like Hogarth, he found it hard to escape the belief that pictures of everyday life were necessarily comical. Some writers even found the sermonising Village Festival comic,[77] and in 1815 Wilkie painted Distraining for Rent to prove that he was not 'merely...a painter of comic scenes'. The constraints within which even he had to operate are, however, shown by the controversy which met this attempt to portray lower class life as tragic rather than comic, which was seen as socially subversive in a way that Morland's pictures never were.[78]

Both the attempts to close the gap between history and genre and the call for decorum in genre were at times justified through an appeal to the taste of the public. While some critics claimed that painting must now appeal to 'the common people',[79] the public that most of them had in mind was the exhibition-going middle-classes. While this public was held to be insufficiently educated to 'feel the higher excellencies in art, as applied to the more recondite studies of the epic in painting', it was thought able to understand the depictions of character and morality seen in genre, which resembled those they encountered in their everyday lives.[80] In the face

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[76] See e.g. the comparison of Wilkie and Teniers in the New Monthly Magazine ii VI, p.258. For Hazlitt, who took Hogarth as his standard for the comic in the visual arts, however, the amiable humour of Wilkie was so gentle as to be invisible ('On Mr. Wilkie's Pictures', Works XVIII, p.98).

[77] The Repository of Arts compared its humour to that of Steen (VII, 1812, p.346), while Cunningham thought it good-humoured, finding in it none of 'the moody groups...which give gloom' to Dutch pictures (Life I, p.301).

[78] See Memoirs and Recollections of the Life of Abraham Raimbach... Including a Memoir of Sir David Wilkie, London, 1843, pp.163-4.

[79] Richter, Day-light, p.57; cf. The London Magazine and Monthly Critical and Dramatic Review I, 1820, p.335.

[80] Somerset House Gazette II, 1824, p.63, on William Mulready's The Widow. On the public's appreciation of character cf. London Magazine i I, 1820, p.698.

of this new public it was increasingly genre, not history, which was held to be universal, to be 'present to every one'.[81] Parallel claims were made in literary criticism. Both Richard Jeffrey, discussing Crabbe, and Walter Scott, discussing Jane Austen, argued that among modern readers faithfully imitated subjects drawn from everyday life had a wider and deeper resonance than those featuring 'princes, warriors, banditti'.[82] Landseer, similarly, argued that since historical subjects and general nature appealed to few, the particular truths of genre should not be disdained:

> If an artist address himself...to his cotemporaries, he must deal in the kind of truth which those cotemporaries understand...if he [now] paints such truth as would be a cottage girl at a well...he addresses himself to feelings which are more diffused, and to observations which a far greater number have made, than if he paints epic pictures, consisting of patriarchs, or classic heroes, and gods.[83]

Cunningham, writing two decades later, was less apologetic, asserting that in scenes of 'domestic nature the heart of England feels an interest; the grand or high historical seems almost a flight above common sympathy'.[84]

Such appeals to the majority were in contrast to the appeal to the enlightened few made by Knight, and an attack on the connoisseurs may be implied in the claim by journal critics that British genre was superior to Dutch genre, whose qualities were merely formal or imitative.[85] While Knight lauded the disinterestedness needed to abstract these qualities from subject matter, others did not see it as so admirable. The genre painter Henry Richter argued that the 'public' will never join connoisseurs in

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81 Hunt, writing about Wilkie and Bird, Examiner II, 1809, p.331.

82 Jeffrey, review of Crabbe's The Borough, Edinburgh Review XVI, 1810, pp.30-55; Scott, review of Austen's Emma, Quarterly Review XIV, 1815, pp.188-201.

83 Review of Publications of Art I, 1808, pp.81-2; cf. ibid., p.111.

84 Cabinet Gallery I, p.180.

85 Attacks on the connoisseurs for preferring Dutch genre to English genre were quite common. See e.g. London Magazine ii III, 1825, p.62.

thinking 'that the material excellencies of the Arts are sufficiently interesting in themselves'.[86] Jameson, however, countered that art appreciation had to be developed, and that should 'every man, woman, and child' turn critic, then the art will be 'vulgarized'.[87]

Wilkie's adaption of the Dutch style thus allowed him to convey a picture of lower class life which critics found convincing, inoffensive and appropriate to the new bourgeois audience for art. His pictures seemed natural, but also to attend to character and morality and refer to past art in a manner traditionally attributed to history painters. It was a brilliant solution to the problem of the representability of the lower classes, and Wilkie was followed in his qualified return to the Dutch style by a number of other British artists who also distanced themselves from what one of their number, Collins, called the 'gross, vulgar, and filthy' subjects and sub-human figures seen in Dutch art (pl.74).[88] One critic praised the Norwich genre painter Michael Sharp for combining 'the excellencies without the grossness of the Dutch School'.[89] The Catalogue Raisonée admired the superior portrayal of character in British genre:

> the Dutch may be a little, and it is but a little better painters of pots, coppers and fiddles, but in every thing which regards the occupations and habits, the natural and external makings of the internal workings of human nature, the English have left them far behind.[90]

Other British genre painters found their work contrasted with Dutch genre

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86 Day-light, p.57.

87 Companion, pp.386-7. For Hazlitt's similar distinction between refined and vulgar taste see Barrell, Political Theory, pp.336-7.

88 Journal of 1817, in Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, I, p.112.

89 Monthly Magazine XXVII, 1809, p.180 on Sharp's The Music Master.

90 Catalogue Raisoneé, p.63. Cf. Repository XI, 1814, p.215 (on Collins).

on the grounds of its moral content.[91] It was only now that the almost subjectless works of Morland began to look, in comparison, like images of 'the idle and the dissolute', his women 'coarse and vulgar'.[92]

British genre painters also followed Wilkie in painting comic subjects. By 1809 the Monthly Magazine was praising Wilkie, Sharp and William Mulready for their humour.[93] It was agreed, however, that this humour was welcome only when it rose above 'caricature' or 'burlesque'.[94] The point echoes that made by Dryden, although, as Landseer, discussing the genre watercolours of Thomas Heaphy, argued, comic painters now had to make their works not only decorous and natural but also moral.[95] The care required is shown by reactions to the drunken man in Mulready's Returning from the Ale House (1809), who moved one critic to ask: 'are all violations of decency and propriety to be tolerated, because the Dutch painters practised them?'[96] Another critic deplored the lack of 'moral point' in Heaphy's works, finding his depictions of 'villainy' in vulgar life 'repulsive to delicate sentiment'.[97] Hunt, who found Heaphy's work imbued with the 'gross Dutch taste', said that he would not hang his picture 'of a sore leg...in the meanest place in my house' (pl.75).[98] This remark, like Lady Palgrave's judgment on Steen,[99] underlines how genre was, for all but

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91 E.g. Repository V, 1811, p.340 (on Bird's Reading of the Will Concluded). For the rise of didactic moral subjects in English genre, see e.g. the review of Sharpe's The Spoilt Child in The Atheneum I, 1828, p.110.

92 'R. S. T.', Examiner III, 1810, p.553.

93 XXVII, 1809, pp.277-8.

94 Examiner V, 1812, p.124 (praising Bird's Village Choristers); Somerset House Gazette I, 1824, p.291 (criticising T. S. Good's The Power of Music).

95 Review of Publications of Art I, 1808, p.188.

96 Repository of Arts, I, 1809, p.490, cit. Heleniak, Mulready, p.82.

97 Somerset House Gazette I, 1823-4, p.194. Cf. Monthly Magazine XXV, 1808, p.348; Repository V, 1811, p.345. The Examiner IV, 1811, p.188, thought Collins' The Tempting Moment 'disgusting' for depicting stealing.

98 Examiner II, 1809, p.332.

99 See above, p.179.

sophisticated connoisseurs, now required to meet a standard of domestic respectability. 'Gross' subjects were more likely to be accepted if, like Wilkie's Village Festival, they carried an obvious moral. Edward Bird's The Cheat Detected (1814) portrayed a violent brawl, but critics merely applauded the rightful rage of the assailant and the cringing fear of the 'rogue' (pl.76).[100] There is a strong contrast to Scotland, where Alexander Carse could paint works like Brawl Outside an Ale House (pl.77) which look back to similar scenes painted by Brouwer (pl.78) and which contain no obvious moral.[101] In Scotland the low genre tradition may have been less charged, and it is also possible that there was a different idea of the line between transgressive humour and the humour of character. Carse, Alexander Fraser, Walter Geikie[102] and Wilkie in his Pitlessie all depict incidents which would have seemed transgressive in England but may have appeared as no more than the humour of character in Scotland.[103] Their lightly comic treatment of drunkenness is in stark contrast to that given by Wilkie in The Village Festival.

Once a respectable language had been found for the depiction of the lower classes artists were free to depart from the Dutch models so closely followed by Wilkie. In the 1810s and 1820s Mulready, Collins and others turned to more colourful palettes and painterly brushwork, portraying settings which bore only a distant relation to Dutch genre. More atavistic uses of the styles and subjects of Dutch genre recur, however, over the

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100 E.g. Examiner VII, 1814, p.334.

101 Cf. The Jolly Beggars (Scottish National Gallery).

102 For Fraser see e.g. The Souter in His Glory (1826), Christie's, 22 March 1974, lot 143.; for Geikie see Etchings Illustrative of Scottish Character and Scenery, Edinburgh, 1841.

103 Even in Scotland, however, Carse attracted some criticism for his 'coarseness of mind', see Errington, Alexander Carse, National Gallery of Scotland exhib. cat., 1987, p.6.

next half-century in the oeuvres of artists like Thomas Webster and Thomas Faed.[104] By the mid-Victorian era Dutch genre had largely lost its heinous overtones and was simply another stylistic option, as is shown by Webster's whimsical use of Steen's Grace before Meat formula in his 1876 Waiting for the Bone (pl.79).[105]

Minuteness

Unlike English genre painters of the previous generation, Wilkie and his followers aped the minute finish of Dutch genre. The vegetables and vessels in the foreground of The Blind Fiddler are, indeed, a tour de force of literal imitation unsurpassed by any painter working in England since Roestraten. The fashion for including still-lifes in genre reached a peak around 1810. Mulready's first genre pictures were works like A Carpenter's Shop and Kitchen, in which the objects strewn about the shop are painted in great detail.[106] Subjects like Wilkie's The China Menders (1819) and Cooper's Earthenware Oh! (British Institution: 1820) seem to have been chosen to show off the artist's skill at imitating utensils. Turner also paid an ostentatious attention to still-life in his genre pieces, notably The Unpaid Bill (c.1808),[107] while the industry of Heaphy's finishing

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104 See E. D. H. Johnson, Social Scene, pp.171. 192.

105 The defusing of Dutch low genre also resulted in the popularity of vignettes in the Dutch low genre style in landscapes, for example in the Teniers-inspired fishermen in Turner's Sun Rising through Vapour (see E. Shanes, Turner's Human Landscape, London, 1990, pp.314-21; Marks, 'Rivalry at the Royal Academy: Wilkie, Turner, and Bird', Studies in Romanticism XX, 1981, pp.335-41). For other e.g.s see Collins' 1827 Frost Scene (Y.C.B.A.), with its debt to Isaack van Ostade, and various pictures painted by Callcott in the 1820s (Brown, Callcott, pp.81-5).

106 Exhibited British Institution 1809. A surviving photograph of the lost work is reproduced in Heleniak, William Mulready, plate 72.

107 His notes for the Harvest Home (c.1809) begin by stressing the still-life objects to be included (see Gage, J. M. W. Turner, pp.144-5).

impressed even Wilkie.[108] The taste for highly finished parerga also affected older artists, as may be seen in Ward's 1811 The Mouse's Petition (pl.80), with its prominent heap of pots and jugs.[109] Ward may have been responding to the advice of the engraver John Raphael Smith: 'you are looking at Morland, look at the old Masters, - look at Teniers; Morland after Teniers is like reading a Grub Street ballad after Milton'.[110]

Detailed attention to domestic objects is especially evident in what might be termed English high genre, the paintings of bourgeois interiors which began to appear a little before 1810. Hunt claimed that the first artists to specialise in this mode were Alfred Chalon and Michael Sharp.[111] The Toilet of the former was acclaimed, in language similar to that applied to Dutch high genre, as 'a most exquisite cabinet gem'.[112] The latter set his pictures in foreign countries or the past, a move defended by one critic for the resulting 'elegance, richness and variety of dress'.[113] Critics noticed the resemblance of Sharp's works, with their abundance of satin, to those of Metsu, and Thomas Hope hung his Music Master beside a work by the Dutch artist.[114] Among other painters to adopt high genre styles after 1810 in domestic scenes and a new type of painting which drew genre subjects from literature were F. P. Stephanoff and G. S. Newton (pl.81). The rise of this mode resulted in the revival of the distinction between low and high genre. Craig contrasted the 'rural' style to the 'beautiful', the latter including images of 'refined domestic duty' set in

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108 Cunningham, Life I, p.298. See also Whitley, Thomas Heaphy, London, 1933, pp.14-15.

109 Cf. some of the paintings of Ibbetson of the same period, e.g. Family Circle at Masham (1809), see Clay, Ibbetson, facing p.100.

110 'Memoir of James Ward R.A.', The Art-Journal I, 1849, p.180.

111 Examiner IV, 1811, p.188.

112 Repository III, 1810, p.366.

113 Reflector I, 1810-11, p.227.

114 Annals V, 1820, p.148.

'elegant apartments'.[115] Hunt separated pictures of 'genteel familiar life' from those depicting 'vulgar life'.[116]

As one would expect from the traditional art theoretical position on detail this high finishing was criticised. History painters derided Wilkie's stress on parerga, refering to his 'pan-and-spoon style'.[117] One writer thought that the 'laborious polish' of Sharp's Pinch of Snuff, as great 'as ever was given by the greatest trifler of the Dutch school', had overpowered the picture's subject.[118] A critic deploring the detail of Mulready and his followers wrote that 'Waistcoats, buttons and gallipots, all equally and highly finished, made the decline of the Flemish school, and will also indicate that of any other which exhibits it'.[119] The old criticisms of minuteness were at times aimed at British genre, as here at William Allan's historical genre painting, The Death of Archbishop Sharpe:

> The minute finishing of this picture is certainly a fault; it induces the spectators to view it from an improper and inadequate distance. In nature, the veins, nails, and folds of the skin...could not be distinguished at the distance supposed in this picture. This finishing is, therefore, false and meretricious.

The writer noted that this high-finishing won 'the injudicious admiration of many visitors'.[120] Other critics also saw the new public for art as perpetuating the admiration for illusionistic high finish traditionally seen as vulgar.[121] Thomas Wainewright objected to the response of bourgeois visitors to Wilkie's Reading of the Will:

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115 'To the Readers', in Lairesse, Treatise, p.289.
116 Examiner III, 1810, p.251; V, 1812, p.106.
117 Cunningham, Life I, p.289. Cf. Hunt on Bird's Good News (Examiner II, 1809, p.332).
118 Repository III, 1810, p.243; cf. Monthly Magazine XXVII, 1809, p.180 (on Mulready's Carpenter's Shop).
119 Annals V, 1820, p.393.
120 Magazine of the Fine Arts I, 1821, p.107.
121 See the remarks of Reynolds and Walpole, above, pp.99, 150.

> it offends me to the soul, to see a parcel of chuckleheaded Papas, doting Mamas, and chalk-and-charcoal-faced Misses...crowding and squeezing, and riding upon one another's backs, to get sight - not of the faces of the folks hearing the Will, but of the brass clasps of the strong box wherein was deposited the Will.[122]

Jameson, whose views on the qualities and faults of Dutch art resembled those of Haydon, echoed Reynolds in accusing 'people', or in other words the public, of finding the works of Ostade more natural than those of Correggio.[123] Other writers, however, were less exclusive. Hunt praised Wilkie's universal appeal, the way in which his 'accurate representation' of objects attracted the 'most common' observers, while his depictions of the inward movements of the soul pleased 'the best educated'.[124]

Praise for the high finishing of English painters was, however, more usual. English finishing was at times said to be the equal of that found in Dutch genre,[125] at times superior, in the sense that it had not fallen into a redundant minuteness. Landseer, for example, remarked that Heaphy had combined high detail with a 'more artful subservience to the principal parts' than that seen in Dutch art.[126] As in Smith's Catalogue, praise for the detail of one painter is vindicated by criticism of the minuteness of another. In 1830 Uwins defended the small size of his genre paintings by claiming that he had not sunk into the minuteness of Van Mieris.[127] In

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122 Writing as 'Janus Weathercock' in the London Magazine I, 1820, p.701. Ruskin later dismissed the Dutch artist as a 'respectable tradesman furnishing well-made articles in oil paint', giving 'the purchaser his thorough money's worth of mechanism' (Modern Painters V (1860); in The Works of John Ruskin (ed. E. T. Cook & A. Wedderburn), London, 1903-12, VII, pp.363-4).

123 Handbook, p.xiv. For her similarities with Haydon see ibid., p.441.

124 Examiner IV, 1811, p.314; cf. idem. in ibid., VIII, 1815, p.156.

125 E.g. the comparison of Mulready's 'exquisite' touch with that of Dusart and Teniers (Review of Publications of Art I, 1808, p.94). Cf. Examiner I, 1808, p.300, on the 'Dutch fidelity' of Wilkie's Card Players.

126 Review of Publications of Art I, 1808, pp.188-9.

127 Mrs Uwins, A Memoir of Thomas Uwins, R.A., London, 1858, II, p.311.

most cases, however, those praising high-finishing in English genre simply ignored the old doubts about Dutch minuteness.[128]

It was not only the 'public', however, who admired the finishing of British genre. Praise for high finishing in English art was beginning to be voiced prior to Wilkie's arrival, suggesting that his style fulfilled an existing desire. In 1793 Sir Edward Harington commended the genre painter Thomas Barker's picture of an old woman in which 'the shrivelled flesh and high-raised veins of the face and hands, are minutely and accurately given'.[129] Six years later Samuel Ireland, who also expressed unqualified admiration for the detail of Dou,[130] praised Hogarth's high finishing and compared it to that of Willem van de Velde. According to Ireland, Hogarth 'never slighted the minutiae, nor considered even trifles as beneath his attention, a circumstance too common with most of our modern artists'.[131] These remarks, directed incongruously at the rough-handling Barker and the painterly Hogarth,[132] further show the dissatisfaction with the broad style of the English school which we have already noted, a dissatisfaction epitomised by Walpole's concern that Reynolds's attack on petty accuracy in

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[128] Among many examples see Annals, I, 1816, p.75, on Wilkie's The Rabbit on the Wall; Examiner V, 1812, on Bird's Village Choristers. Opinions about the colour of British genre, while never so heated, show the same mix of opinions. British painters were, like the Dutch, at times criticised for being too brown (e.g. Examiner VII, 1814, p.334, on Wilkie's The Refusal; London Magazine ii III, 1825, p.63, on his Parish Beadle); while at others they were criticised for not following the 'rich' brown of, say, Ostade (Review of Publications of Art I, 1808, p.126, on Drummond); or alternatively for being too 'dingy' in a way that departed from 'the day-light of Teniers, and of nature' (Annals IV, 1819, p.313, on Rippingille). More usually, however, the colour of British genre painters was simply praised and compared with that of their Dutch counterparts (e.g. Repository X, 1813, p.148, comparing Wilkie's Blind Man's Buff to Ostade).

[129] A Schizzo on the Genius of Man, Bath, 1793, pp.130, 184-5.

[130] A Picturesque Tour Through Holland, Brabant, and Part of France, London, 1790, pp.95-6.

[131] Graphic Illustrations of Hogarth, London, 1799, II, pp.70, 65-6.

[132] By 1815 Hunt was claiming that Barker's 'looseness of manner' was 'offensive' (Examiner VIII, p.156).

Discourse Eleven 'will rather do hurt than good on his disciples, and make them neglect all kind of finishing'.[133] By 1820, in the wake of the Wilkie revolution, a critic was applauding English artists for moving away from 'the school of Reynolds' and towards 'legitimate detail'.[134]

Concern about the slapdash approach of English painters was especially evident among connoisseurs like Knight, many of whom felt a traditional desire for a product in which the labour and skill of the executant were ostensibly realised. The skill of Dutch art had always been valued by collectors, and the new articulacy of the collecting interest played, as we have seen, an important role in the revaluation of Dutch minuteness. By comparison, English art seemed inadequate. Dawe complained that English painters take pride in omitting the details of a picture, forgetting 'how much of the beauty of Cuyp, Ostade, and Teniers is derived from their exquisite perfection in these particulars'.[135] While such feelings must have contributed to the popularity of Wilkie and his successors, as late as 1815 a correspondent responded to the Institution exhibitions by regretting that modern artists had failed to achieve 'the exquisite finish' of Ostade and Dou and 'the elegantly laboured' finish of Zoffany (see pl.65).[136] Nevertheless, many of the important collectors of Dutch genre also bought British genre paintings.[137]

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133 Letter to William Mason, 10 Feb.1783 (Correspondence XXIX, p.284).

134 Annals V, 1820, p.388.

135 Life, pp.194-5. Cf. Review of Publications of Art I, 1808, p.90 (on H. Ashby's The Attic Artist); Examiner V, 1812, p.106 (on Collins' May-Day); London Magazine ii III 1825, p.53 (on Stothard's Canterbury Pilgrims).

136 'Spero Meliora', letter to New Monthly Magazine i IV, 1815, p.291. The Institution's 1814 exhibition catalogue recommended Zoffany's 'care, industry' and 'attention to nature' to young painters (Catalogue of Pictures by the late Wiliam Hogarth,...and J. Zoffani, London, 1814, p.11).

137 See e.g. the Prince Regent's purchase of Bird's Village Choristers; H. P. Hope's purchase of Sharp's Cup of Tea (see Annals V, 1820, p.151); and Wellington's commission of Wilkie's Chelsea Pensioners. Collectors tended, however, to specialise in one school or the other: those

British genre, however, also appealed to the collectors from the bourgeois 'public' who, as some critics feared, placed a premium on high finishing with its implications of honest labour. Among the collectors in question were entrepreneurs like John Sheepshanks and Robert Vernon,[138] and the ironmaster John Gibbons, who wrote in 1843 to the genre painter William Frith: 'I love finish, even to the minutest details. I know the time it takes, and that it must be paid for...where there is beauty, finish, and taste, I care but little about "originality".'[139] Compared to the collectors from the social élite, however, these bourgeois collectors took little interest in Dutch genre, perhaps because they attached more importance to the decorum and moral subject matter through which English artists distanced themselves from their Dutch antecedents, perhaps because Dutch genre was now too rare and too costly.[140] In preferring British genre to Dutch genre these collectors defined themselves as a distinct group, a group whose taste was closer to that of the new bourgeois public for art from whose ranks they had sprung than to that of the older élite.

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above owned only a few British genre paintings, while the Earl of Mulgrave owned many works by Wilkie but few Dutch genre pieces, see his posth. sale, Christie's, May 12 1832.

[138] See D. S. Macleod, 'Art Collecting and Victorian Middle-class Taste', Art History X, 1987, pp.328-338.

[139] W. P. Frith, Autobiography (1887), cit. Haskell, Past and Present in Art and Taste, New Haven & London, 1987, p.211.

[140] See Macleod, 'Art Collecting', pp.328-338; E. D. H. Johnson, Social Scene, p.186.

Conclusion

Ancients and Moderns, an Old Quarrel with New Actors

This thesis has shown how the paradigmatic inferiority of Dutch genre was challenged through a reappraisal of its qualities, with the result that, by the early nineteenth century, literal truth, minute detail, colour and chiaroscuro were admired and seen as redeeming vulgar subjects and poor design. Even some of the subjects came to be valued as expressions of peasant domesticity or character. By 1824 Haydon was lamenting that:

> Nothing bold or masculine or grand or powerful touches an English connoisseur - it must be small and highly wrought, and vulgar & humorous & broad & palpable. I question whether Reynolds would now make the impression he did, so completely is the taste ebbing to a Dutch one.[1]

Haydon blamed this trend on Wilkie, underlining how it both encouraged and was encouraged by the way in which British painters looked to Dutch models.

The redemption of Dutch genre was, however, never more than partial. The old criticisms were still heard, if in muted form, in the Academy, and also among those arguing that British genre had avoided the minuteness and errors of taste seen in Dutch genre. The distinction drawn between British and Dutch genre was, in effect, similar to the paradigmatic distinction between Italian and Dutch art. Dutch genre was said to offer only literal copying and mechanical excellence, while British genre stood for the higher qualities of mind, morality, narrative, expression and decorum. The

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[1] Diary II, p.461 (6 Feb. 1824). It is unclear whether 'broad' refers to brushwork, in which case it would seem to contradict 'highly wrought', or vulgarity. 'Palpable' is also obsure, but may refer to the painting of objects with such mimetic skill that they seem touchable.

reallocation of the qualities associated with history to genre was an adept response to the realisation that the strength of British art lay in the latter. Dutch genre played the role of foil, embodying characteristics beside which British genre seemed elevated. By the mid-century, writers no longer felt any need to apologise for the way in which the British had abandoned history for genre, and detailed genre paintings began to seem as quintessentially British as the broad style had seemed around 1800.[2]

A situation in which Dutch genre was being lauded by some writers for the qualities which, according to others, proved its inferiority to British genre is symptomatic of the way in which agreement about the paradigms upon which art theory had rested was disintegrating. Simultaneously, the belief that painters should take a reverential attitude to the past and its hallowed models of good and bad practice was replaced by a growing perception of a gap between past and present art. This gap may be felt in the different attitudes of those who were buying and selling Dutch art and those who were painting or discussing British art. Artists, especially those linked with the Academy, began to object to what they saw as a taste for Old Masters by collectors which robbed them of patronage. This opposition to 'anti-contemporanianism',[3] already expressed by Hogarth, began to be voiced more widely around the turn of the century.[4]

The threat, however, was not only seen as lying in a taste for Dutch art. When the Institution mounted an exhibition of Italian, Spanish and

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[2] See e.g. Cunningham, Cabinet Gallery II, p.90; Richard and Samuel Redgrave, A Century of British Painters, London, 1866, pp.288-89.

[3] Literary Gazette I, 1817, p.183.

[4] See e.g. Galt, Life and Works of West, II, pp.144-5; Shee, Rhymes, passim; Opie, Lectures, pp.94-5; cf. Magazine of the Fine Arts I, 1821, pp.10-21; Catalogue Raisonée, passim. Cf. Funnell, 'Knight', pp.45-6.

French art in 1816 a second Catalogue Raisonée appeared, with comments often identical to those which the author(s) had aimed at Dutch art in 1815. The 'drollery' of an incongruous dog in a religious work by Veronese is noted, while an Annibale Carracci is called 'correctly-minute'. Poussin's Plague at Athens is described as:

> a whole people suffering under the horrors of Cholera Morbus, like a girl's boarding school in a cheap and plentiful plum season...the variegated brown pervading the whole, gives it the pathos of one vast cess-pool, one extensive field of dung and desolation.[5]

The direction of such criticisms, made only partly in jest, at a history painting by a revered French master suggests that what had piqued the author(s) about the 1815 show was less that it was devoted to Netherlandish art than that it was a blatant gesture in favour of the collecting of Old Masters on the part of a body set up to promote British art.

The application to French and Italian art of terms hitherto applied only to Dutch art shows that Old Masters of any school might now be seen as posing an equal threat to the patronage of modern art. Those more sympathetic to past art also began to take a more egalitarian, if still cautious, attitude to the relative merits of schools and genres, a change epitomised by Leslie's claim that 'genius and mediocrity have nothing in common; Raphael and Ostade may be classed together, but never Raphael and Carlo Maratti'.[6] In the early nineteenth century connoisseurs became more interested in hitherto unfashionable schools and periods, and the great broadening of the canon described by Haskell began.[7] This movement, which

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[5] A Catalogue Raisonné of the Pictures now Exhibiting in Pall Mall, London, 1816, pp.26, 33, 34. The 'Poussin' was, ironically, by the Flemish painter Michael Sweerts, see V. Bloch, Michael Sweerts, The Hague, 1968, p.214. I owe this observation to John Gage.

[6] Memoirs of Constable, p.303. Hemingway ('Progess') notes that Leslie presented similar views as Professor of Painting at the Academy from 1847 to 1852.

[7] Rediscoveries in Art, passim.

was inspired in part by the same desire to define an élite taste which had encouraged the fashion for Dutch art, also began to affect artists, who increasingly felt free to borrow from a wide range of past styles. This was especially true in the 1820s, when, inter alia, Turner and Stothard looked to Watteau, and Palmer and Richmond to German primitives. Such styles still carried certain associations, but these no longer bore a crushing weight of negativity or positivity. The result was a more playful attitude to the past, one in which the artist asserted his independence of it and his right to dispose its resources as he wished. Originality, or freedom from the past, gained increasing admiration.[8] The process may be summarised as the dissolution of the paradigmatic understanding of past art, a dissolution seen also in the lessening of the incline of the hierarchy of genres and schools.

I should end by insisting that the old criticisms of Dutch art were, and still are, available. Ruskin, for example, used an attack on Dutch minuteness to explain why the high detail of Quattrocento art was admirable.[9] This shows, however, how criticisms of Dutch art were released from their paradigmatic framework: instead of contrasting Dutch minuteness with Italian breadth, Ruskin contrasts it with Italian minuteness. As agreement that Dutch art was a paradigm of bad practice declined so Dutch genre painters and their works, like the Dutch nation before them, acquired a harmless picturesque status. By the mid-nineteenth century they had become the stuff of whimsical essays and ghost stories.[10]

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[8] E.g. Hazlitt, 'On Genius and Originality', in The Champion, Dec.4 1814, in Works XVIII, pp.64-70.

[9] Modern Painters I (1843), in Works, III, p.175.

[10] See respectively G. A. Sala, Dutch Pictures; with some Sketches in the Flemish Manner, London, 1861; Sheridan le Fanu, 'Schalken the Painter', in Dublin University Magazine XIII, 1839, pp.579-91.

Appendix I

Genre Painters by Order of Incidence in Sales Catalogues

1689-92		1699-1718		1722-40		1741-59	
Heemskerk	885*	Heemskerk	24*	Teniers	30	Teniers	166
Boon	113+	Teniers	21	Heemskerk	28*	A. van Ostade	79
Teniers	89	Brouwer	15	A. van Ostade	21	Heemskerk	66*
Brouwer	63	Molenaer	7	Schalken	10	Dou	45
Castro	44	Dou	6	Dou	7	Brouwer	32
De Ryck	34	Schalken	4	Mieris (family)	7	Mieris (family)	31
A. van Ostade	29	Bamboccio	3	Bruegehl (fam.)	6	Steen	31
Laroon	27	Mieris (family)	3	Bamboccio	4	Schalken	26
Molenaer	18	(Boon	2)	Brouwer	4	Miel	24
Roestraten	13	(Wyck	2)	Miel	3	Bamboccio	23
Brueghel(fam.)	13	(Roestraten	1)	(Wyck	2)	Palamedes	18
Van der Elst	12	(De Ryck	1)	* incl. 2 'Old Heemskerk'		Angillis	17
Van de Venne	10	* incl. 11 'Old Heemskerk'				Hals	17
Dou	9					Molenaer	14
Mason	9					Terborch	12
Potuyl	9					Metsu	11
Wyck	8					Netscher	10
Crayer	8					Chardin	8
Hondius	7					Wyck	8
Mieris	7					Brueghel (family)	8
Mostaert	7					De Hooch	7
Mooy	7					(Boon	5)
* incl. 238 'Old Heemskerk'						* incl. 9 'Old Heemskerk'	
+ incl. 68 'Old Boon'							

(Painters in parentheses are those of particular interest to whom too few pictures were attributed in a certain period to merit inclusion in the table for that period).

1770-86		1793-1815		1819-34	
Teniers	80	Teniers	187	Teniers	113
A. van Ostade	27	A. van Ostade	89	A. van Ostade	53
Heemskerk	26*	Brouwer	61	Steen	48
Le Nain	17	Steen	52	Brouwer	29
Dou	16	Heemskerk	48*	Dou	27
Mieris (family)	15	Mieris (family)	36	Bega	25
Steen	15	Dou	33	Terborch	24
Molenaer	15	Schalken	33	Dusart	23
Schalken	14	Miel	26	I. van Ostade	22
Palamedes	13	Bega	25	Schalken	20
Brouwer	11	I. van Ostade	24	Maes	16
Bamboccio	10	Metsu	22	Mieris (family)	16
Hals	9	Lingelbach	21	Sorgh	16
Tilborch	9	Terborch	21	De Hooch	15
Brackenburgh	6	Duck	18	Metsu	15
Brueghel (fam.)	6	Netscher	17	Heemskerk	11
Duck	6	Palamedes	17	Molenaer	10
Terborch	6	Hals	15	Netscher	9
Brekelenkam	5	Molinaer	15	Lingelbach	8
Lingelbach	5	Van Tol	14	Ryckaert	8
(Roestraten	1)	(Wyck	10)	(Wyck 2)	
(Wyck	1)	* incl. 1 'Old Heemskerk'			
* incl. 1 'Old Heemskerk'					

Sources

My intention in each case has been to use a sample large enough to establish general trends. Surviving catalogues for the period between 1699 and 1740 are rare, and I have used all those that I could find. For the 1689-92 period I have simply used the catalogues in the British Museum. For the period after 1740, for which far more catalogues survive, I have allowed the samples to be limited to those catalogues contained in certain bound collections in the Victoria and Albert Museum, B.L. and Y.C.B.A..

1689-92: B.L.1402.g.1.2-52, 44a, 54-69, 71, 73-109, 111-32
B.L. Cup.645.e.5 (16) (129 catalogues)

1699-1718: V.& A. MS 86 00 18-19 (all relevant catalogues). Undated catalogues in these volumes have been included if there is good reason for thinking that they date from this period, viz if they carry the name of the early eighteenth-century auctioneer Peter Motteux, or if they bear such titles as 'at the Three Chairs, Covent Garden', a formula found in sale catalogues dated before 1720 but not in any known to me dated after 1720.
B.L. Cup.645.e.5 (3, 7, 11-12, 12a, 13-15: again some of these catalogues are undated but are clearly of this period).
B.L. S.C.921 (1) (26 catalogues)

1722-40: V.& A. MS 86 00 18-19 (all relevant catalogues)
B.L. C119.h.3 (2-4, 6-7, 9, 11, 13)
B.L. S.C.213 (3-4), S.C.237 (5, 7), S.C.307 (3), S.C.331 (16), S.C.332 (7) (44 catalogues)

1741-60: V.& A. MS 86 00 18-19 (all relevant catalogues)
B.L. C119.h.3 (17, 19, 25-6, 28-9, 34, 36-7, 41, 47-9, 52) (105 catalogues)

1770-86: B.L. C119.h.3 (62, 66, 79, 80)
B.L. S.C.1070 (11, 13, 15-17, 21, 23-9, 33-4, 36-8, 40-8, 53, 55-6, 60-1) (36 catalogues)

1793-1815: Y.C.B.A. sale catologues, vols.87, 88, 89, 90, 91 (all relevant catalogues (103 catalogues)

1819-34: Y.C.B.A. sale catalogues, vols.90. 94, 95, 96, 100 (all relevant catalogues (61 catalogues)

Note

It is important to stress the limits of the information which can be extrapolated from these tables.
i) Prior to the late eighteenth century the accuracy of attributions to genre painters in sales is, for the most part, unverifiable. While these figures may give some indication of how many paintings by certain artists there were on the market they should therefore be treated with caution. It should be remembered that, as today, certain painters were probably used as 'bucket' attributions for pictures whose authorship was uncertain: it seems likely that this was the case with Heemskerk in the 1689-92 catalogues.
ii) The tables do not indicate which attributions were thought the most valuable. Their main utility is in showing rising and falling interest in certain artists, such as the fall of Heemskerk, or the growing interest in Steen, Maes, Bega, Dusart and I. van Ostade towards the end of the period.

Appendix II

Netherlandish Genre Painters in England between 1660 and 1700

This appendix summarises what little is known about the Netherlandish genre painters in England between 1660 and 1700. Notes on all of them except Verryck are given in Thieme-Becker, and on all except De Ryck, Tilborch and Verryck in Waterhouse, Dictionary of 16th and 17th Century British Painters. Dates are taken from Waterhouse except where stated.

Jan de Boekhorst (1661-1724)
History and portrait painter. Studied under Kneller in England (Thieme-Becker). Four genre paintings are attributed to him in the 1689-92 catalogues.

Daniel Boon
Flemish genre and history painter. In London by the 1660s (Gerson, Ausbreitung, p.411). In 1704 Buckeridge ('Essay', p.404) wrote that he 'died lately', but the posthumous sale of the pictures of 'D. Boone' was held in on 23-5 September. 1692 (London Gazette 2803, 19 Sept. 1692). The 1689-92 catalogues mention both 'Boon' and 'Old Boon'. The only other genre painter often called 'old' is Heemskerk; in both cases the distinction may be between a father and son. Buckeridge said that Boon specialised in grotesque faces, a claim borne out by the subjects given to him in the 1689-92 sales, which also suggest that he often painted men with food, especially chickens. Some of these pictures are said to be self-portraits. Attributions to him are almost non-existent after 1700.

Pieter Borsselaer (In England 1664-79)
Dutch portrait and history painter. According to Buckeridge ('Essay', p.405) painted 'three Boors' in a collaborative picture.

Laureys de Castro (In London by 1680)
Flemish ship, portrait and genre painter. See Mr. Cartwright's Pictures, p.72. His genre designs are today known only by the prints after them.

Adriaen van Diest (Died in England: Thieme-Becker)
Portrait and landscape painter from the Hague. See Buckeridge, 'Essay', pp.468-9. Four genre paintings are attributed to him in the 1689-92 catalogues.

Egbert van Heemskerk (1634-1704)
Haarlem painter of genre and religious satires. See Buckeridge, Essay, p.429; Raines, 'Heemskerck', passim. An eponymous son who was also a painter died in c.1744. Raines (p.119) states that the documents collected by Bredius ('Bijdragen', p.112) show that he was born in c.1635. However, since Heemskerk gave his age as twenty-eight in June 1663 and thirty-one in July 1665 he must have been born in June or July of 1634. Raines does not consider the possibility that there was a third Egbert van Heemskerk, as suggested in 1870 by Seguier (Dictionary, pp.89-90). The evidence lies partly in Gambarini's attribution of a picture owned by Pembroke to 'Old Egbert Hemskirk (the grand Father)' (Description, p.73), partly in the attribution of pictures to 'Old Heemskerk' as well as 'Heemskerk' in the 1689-92 sales. While one would assume that these two painters were those who died in 1704 and 1744, it is unlikely, if not impossible, that an artist who was active before 1689 was still performing on stage over fifty

years later, as the Heemskerk who died in 1744 was (Raines, p.121). The evidence is inconclusive, but the possibility that there was a third Heemskerk, the father of the artist who died in 1704, should not be dismissed.

Abraham Hondius (c.1625/30-1691)
Rotterdam landscape and animal painter. See Buckeridge, 'Essay', p.436. Came to England in 1666 (Thieme-Becker), by 1674 (Waterhouse). Titles (e.g. 'Woman playing on cittern', B.L.1402.g.1.34 lot 172) suggest that he was the only Dutch painter of high genre apart from Schalken (excepting the occasional works of Roestraten and De Ryck) working in England in the later seventeenth century.

Marcellus Lauron or Laroon (c.1648/9-1701/2)
Drapery, portrait and genre painter from The Hague. See Buckeridge, Essay, p.444; Raines, Laroon, pp.5-18; Shesgreen, Criers, passim. Probably came to England in the 1660s. Designed a famous set of Cries of London. His genre paintings are now known only from prints which, together with the titles of pictures given to him, suggest that he specialised in sexual and scatological scenes and religious satires. His epoymous son (see Raines, op.cit., passim.) also painted genre, usually at some remove from the Dutch genre tradition.

Pieter van Roestraten (c.1627-1700. Arrived in England in the 1660s.)
Haarlem genre painter. See Buckeridge, 'Essay', pp.459-60. Like Steen, whose style his manner resembled, he painted both high and low genre (see the works now in the collection of Lord Clifford, Ugbrooke). He later turned to still-life (see Shaw, 'Roestraten', pp.402-6).

Willem de Ryck (1635-1699, died in England: Thieme-Becker)
Antwerp history and genre painter. See Buckeridge, 'Essay', pp.413-4. His collection was sold in several sales in 1690 (B.L.1402.g.1.37, 39, 57, 58).

Godfried Schalken (1643-1706. In England 1692-7.)
Leiden genre painter. Worked mainly as a portraitist in England but also painted some genre scenes (see above, p.70). Four genre paintings are attributed to him in the 1689-92 catalogues.

Gillis van Tilborch (c.1625-1678)
Flemish genre painter. The only work he is known to have painted in England is The Tichborne Dole (1670, Tichborne Park), a group (crowd?) portrait with genre elements. See Jackson-Stops, Treasure Houses, p.147.

Hendrik Vergazoon (fl. 1690-1703. In England in the 1690s.)
Dutch landscape painter. See Buckeridge, 'Essay', p.474. Painted two genre scenes now in the collection at Althorp (see above p.26).

Ferdinando Verryck
Along with Bullord and Millington one of the three main auctioneers of the 1689-92 period. His name suggests Netherlandish origin. One genre piece, a 'Bawdy house', is given to him in the 1689-92 catalogues (B.L.1402.g.1.64 lot 299).

Thomas Wyck (c.1616-1677. In England c.1673.)
Haarlem painter of landscape and genre, especially alchemists and Bambocciate. Pictures by him were bought for Ham House (see above p.26).

Appendix III

Subjects of Dutch and Flemish Genre Paintings in 129 Sale Catalogues, 1689-92

Sources: B.L.1402.g.1.2-52, 44a, 54-69, 71, 73-109, 111-32
B.L. Cup.645.e.5. no.16

'Drolls', 'conversations', 'fancies'	762	(20.4%)	Social satires: 1695 (45.33%)	Comic genre: 2731 (73.2%)
Alehouse scenes, incl. drinking, gaming, smoking, dancing, fighting, 'Dutch kitchens', scenes with boors	804	(21.5%)		
Country feasts, weddings, kermissen	49			
Figures eating or with food	80			
Heads, droll heads	211	(5.64%)		
Catholic satires: Jesuits, priests, monks, friars, nuns, confessions, Inquisition	184	(4.92%)	Religious satires: 222 (5.94%)	
Dissent satires: Quakers, Muggletonians, Presbyterians, 'Father Peters'	38	(1.02%)		
The battle of the sexes	79	(2.11%)	Scatological/ physical/ sexual: 262 (7.01%)	
'Obscene pieces', 'amorous pieces', bawdy houses	136	(3.64%)		
Naked women, women dressing or bathing	28			
Scatological	12			
Fleaing, lousing, blowing nose	7			
Surgeons, blood letters, tooth drawers	40		Various professions (probably satirical): 207 (5.54%)	
Mountebanks, quack doctors	19			
Doctors, doctors' visits, Dutch doctors	18			
Lawyers, dying men making wills	19			
Fortune tellers, gipsies	14			
Schools	26			
Usurers	38			
Alchemists	15			
Conjurors, Faust	18			
Animal satires: monkeys, cats, owls	51			
Figures with animals	35			
Fools, contortionists	48			
Domestic virtue: women and servants working, women with children	48		Images of virtue: 95 (2.54%)	
Saying grace	29			
Miscellaneous images of virtue: woman keeping Shrovetide, man giving alms, etc.	18			

Musicians, ballad singers	140	
Figures reading	15	
Crafts, trades, professions	73	
Soldiers, corps de garde	28	
Robberies, bandits	14	
Flogging	4	
Travellers	5	
Milkmaids	15	Miscellaneous: 516 (13.8%)
Kitchens	27	
Markets	20	
Blanket Fair	7	
Beggars	30	
Old women, old men	22	
Boys, girls	24	
Five senses	26	
Candlelights, torchlights, firelights	66	
Saints, hermits, philosophers	80	Genre subject paintings: 172 (4.6%)
Figures from popular legend (Fair Rosamond, Jane Shore, etc.)	72	
Anecdotes and proverbs	20	
Unspecified figural subjects	62	
Unspecified subjects by genre painters	87	
High genre	76 (2.03%)	
Total	3739	

Appendix IV

The Dutch Genre Canon

This table shows which Dutch genre painters were considered the most important by a number of authors. This information is arrived at through choices of Dutch painters made for more general collections of painters' lives, or through those genre painters selected for Smith's Catalogue and Nieuwenhuys's Review, or the list of 'the most considerable' or 'the highest rank' of the Dutch school' given respectively by Reynolds and Jameson. Brief mentions of painters in entries for other painters have been omitted, as have collections of lives which aim to be all-inclusive, such as those by Sandrart, Descamps and Pilkington.

Sources (see next page)	1666-88	1695	1706	1715	1754	1781	1829-33	1834	1844
Low Genre									
Brouwer	*	*	*	*	*	*			
Teniers			*		*	*	*	*	*
Adriaen van Ostade					*	*	*	*	*
Isaac van Osade							*	*	
Bamboccianti									
Bamboccio	*	*	*	*	*	+			
Miel					*	+			
High/Low Genre									
Steen						*	*	*	*
Maes							*	*	
High Genre									
Dou	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Frans van Mieris			*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Netscher			*		*		*		*
Schalken				*	*		*	*	
Terborch					*	*	*	*	*
Slingelandt					*		*	*	
Metsu						*	*	*	*
Van der Werff					*		*		
Van der Neer					*		*		*
De Hooch							*	*	*
Willem van Mieris							*	*	

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